



Black Pro-Life Advocates Head to California to Support Pastor Walter Hoye

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Oakland, CA (LifeNews.com) -- Several African-American pro-life leaders are headed to Oakland today to support Walter Hoye, a local black pro-life pastor who will be headed to prison for trying to share the pro-life message.

Hoye was found to have violated what pro-life attorneys call an unconstitutional city law that is used specifically to prevent providing information to women outside abortion centers.

He was found guilty of two misdemeanor counts of unlawfully approaching abortion center customers in violation of Oakland's recently enacted ordinance prohibiting any contact within 100 feet of an abortion business.

Hoye could face up to two years in prison and \$4,000 in fines.

He will be sentenced this week and black pro-life leaders like Rev. Johnny Hunter, president of LEARN, will be there to support him.

"We're coming here because black pastors and bishops around this country are just learning of Walter's fate and to silence the Gospel is unacceptable," Hunter told LifeNews.com. "It violates the freedom of speech of every Christian in this nation."

Dr. Levon Yuille, head of the National Black Pro-Life Congress, says she sees Hoye "standing for life and we ought to stand with him."

The black pro-life leaders say Hoye is merely standing up for the African-American community, which the Oakland abortion facility targets.

About 37 percent of pregnancies for black women ended in abortion, compared with 12 percent for non-Hispanic white women and 19 percent for Hispanic women in 2004, according to the National Center for Health Statistics.

In 2004, 453,000 black babies were aborted while 418,000 white and 269,000 Hispanic babies were aborted, according to the federal report.

"This is a deliberate attempt to silence the church and its prophetic role in protecting the innocent lives in our community and especially black babies," says Pastor Stephen Broden of Dallas, Texas.

"Pastor Hoye represents a legacy of resistance by Black preachers to injustices perpetrated on the beloved community. Prenatal murder of Black babies by the abortion industry should be resisted by every black pastor across this country," he said.

Hoye, who is African-American, feels a special calling to work for the end of the high number of abortions taking place in the black community.

As part of his efforts, he stands in front of an abortion business in Oakland with leaflets about abortion alternatives and a sign offering help for women.

At a pre-trial hearing in Oakland Superior Court last month, city officials demanded that Rev. Hoye plead guilty to the misdemeanor counts and agree to stay away from local abortion centers for an unspecified period of time in exchange for dismissing three other criminal charges against him. Hoye refused and now a jury has found him guilty of violating the new law.

Allison Aranda, an attorney with the Life Legal Defense Foundation, which is representing Hoye, tells LifeNews.com that the jury convicted Hoye despite a video tape the defense presented at trial showing that prosecution witnesses conjured up phantom patients whom Hoye had allegedly harassed.

The tape also showed that Hoye had not threatened two abortion facility escorts or its director, as had been alleged.

"This is a miscarriage of justice and we will appeal this verdict," Aranda said.

"After speaking with several jurors after the verdict was read, it is clear that the court's failure and outright refusal to instruct the jury regarding the key elements of the crime led to the erroneous conviction of Rev. Hoye," she added.

LLDF attorneys say the "clinic escorts" are upset by Hoye's presence and they surround him to impede his movement, block his sign with large sheets of blank cardboard, and make raucous noise to drown out his quiet offers of assistance.

Because their actions didn't deter Hoye, the Oakland city council approved the new law. The penalty for illegally approaching a person to talk or hand out a leaflet is one year in jail and/or a \$2,000 fine.

At the pre-trial hearing, Hoye's LLDF attorneys cross-examined the victims.

The escorts admitted that Hoye never used force against them, threatened them, or blocked them. They proudly testified that they routinely block Hoye to prevent women from seeing his sign.

Hoye's sentencing by California Superior Court Judge Stuart Hing is scheduled for Thursday at 1:30 p.m.

Related web sites:

Life Legal Defense Foundation - <http://www.lldf.org>

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