



Pro-Life Pastor Walter Hoye Begins Serving 30-Day Abortion-Related Jail Sentence

by **Steven Ertelt**

LifeNews.com Editor

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Oakland, CA (LifeNews.com) -- A pro-life African-American pastor, Walter Hoye, has begun serving a 30-day jail sentence for sharing a pro-life message outside abortion centers. Hoye was previously found guilty of violating what pro-life attorneys call an unconstitutional new city law designed specifically to target him.

Oakland officials had enacted the law, which has been heavily criticized as curtailing free speech rights. The ordinance prohibits contact within eight feet of women entering abortion businesses without their consent.

On Friday, Hoye began serving the 30-day sentence and he will also receive three years probation, pay a \$1,000 fine and a \$130 restitution fee, and be ordered to stay 100 feet away from any abortion center in the city of the Oakland.

Judge Stuart Hing of the Alameda Superior Court denied the defense motion to stay the sentence pending appeal.

At a hearing on February 19, Judge Hing stated that he had not intended to impose any fine or jail time on Rev. Hoye if he would agree to stay away from the abortion center. Reverend Hoye refused to agree not to offer alternatives to abortion-minded women.

"If you are reading this email then it can only mean that I have been incarcerated," he told LifeNews.com in an email sent by his attorneys. "I will be back. Thank you all so much! May God bless you and keep you always."

Dozens in the African-American and pro-life communities from around the nation who came out in support of Rev. Hoye were outraged by the sentence.

"It is absolutely incredible that in America an individual can be sentenced to jail for engaging in peaceful free speech activity on a public sidewalk," Allison Aranda, an attorney for the Life Legal Defense Foundation, told LifeNews.com. "Rev. Hoye is being singled out for particularly harsh punishment because he refused to agree not to offer help to women considering abortion. Where is the justice in that?"

Hoye is an African-American pastor who feels a special calling to work for the end of the targeting of black Americans by abortion.

According to 2004 statistics from the National Center for Health Statistics, about 37 percent of pregnancies among black women end in abortion, compared with 12 percent for non-Hispanic white women and 19 percent for Hispanic women.

As part of his efforts, he stands in front of an abortion clinic in Oakland with leaflets offering abortion alternatives and a sign reading, "Jesus loves you and your baby. Let us help."

Aranda previously told 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.

The firm is also challenging the constitutionality of the ordinance in a lawsuit asking it to be struck down.

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 spent 40 days fasting prior to beginning the jail sentence, which made Bill May, the chairman of the pro-life Catholics for the Common Good, describe him as slight and gaunt as he was calmly led from the Alameda County courtroom.

Related web sites:

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

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