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Federal Lawsuit Filed against City of Ann Arbor for Banning Anti-Abortion Sign Display Outside of Local Planned Parenthood

Ann Arbor, Michigan (April 23, 2013) — Today, the American Freedom Law Center (AFLC), a national, non-profit Judeo-Christian law firm, filed a federal civil rights lawsuit against the City of Ann Arbor, Michigan, and its Chief of Police for prohibiting a pro-life advocate from displaying a “Free Ultrasound” sign in his vehicle, which he legally parks on the public street outside of a Planned Parenthood abortion facility in Ann Arbor. AFLC filed the lawsuit on behalf of Paul Dobrowolski, who for many years has engaged in peaceful and non-obstructive anti-abortion protests on the public sidewalks and streets outside of the local Planned Parenthood.

In 2012, the City of Ann Arbor ticketed Dobrowolski for displaying his pro-life vehicle signs. The displayed signs included the following: “Ask to See the Ultrasound,” “Abortion Hurts Women,” and “Free Ultrasound, Family Life Services, 2950 Packard, YPSI, 734-434-3088.” According to Ann Arbor’s City Code, a person is not allowed to park a vehicle on a City street or highway “for the principal purpose of . . . [d]isplaying advertising.” The “Free Ultrasound” sign was considered “advertising” by the City police, and thus prohibited by the Code, resulting in the tickets.

On two occasions, Dobrowolski had to pay fines because of the tickets. Through this lawsuit, he is seeking a federal court order that would enjoin the future enforcement of the City Code, allowing him to continue displaying all of his signs without fear of receiving another ticket. As alleged in the complaint filed today, Dobrowolski’s pro-life signs, including his Free Ultrasound sign, constitute political speech and are thereby protected from such restrictions under the First Amendment.

Robert Muike, Co-Founder and Senior Counsel of AFLC, commented: “The City’s content-based restriction on our client’s pro-life, political speech cannot withstand constitutional

scrutiny. Indeed, it is evident that the City of Ann Arbor is targeting our client’s speech because it is pro-life and likely harming Planned Parenthood’s abortion business. The City is thereby using its speech restriction to silence pro-life advocates who are peacefully displaying signs for the ‘principal purpose’ of saving the lives of unborn children. The Constitution forbids such restrictions.”

David Yerushalmi, AFLC Co-Founder and Senior Counsel, added: “The American Freedom Law Center is committed to protecting the lives of the unborn and the free speech rights of those who protest the horror of abortion. Unfortunately, today the government seems to have little respect for the right to life and the right to freedom of speech. We seek to reverse that harmful trend.”

AFLC’s complaint was filed in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan. Once served, the City of Ann Arbor will have twenty-one days to respond.

The *American Freedom Law Center* is a Judeo-Christian law firm that fights for faith and freedom. It accomplishes its mission through litigation, public policy initiatives, and related activities. It does not charge for its services. The Law Center is supported by contributions from individuals, corporations, and foundations, and is recognized by the IRS as a section 501(c)(3) organization. Visit us at www.americanfreedomlawcenter.org.

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