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## **Free Speech Victory: D.C. Federal Judge Halts Transit Authority’s Restriction on Anti-Jihad Advertisement**

Washington, D.C. (October 5, 2012) — This afternoon, a federal judge for the District of Columbia granted the American Freedom Law Center (AFLC)’s request on behalf of its clients for an injunction to halt the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)’s censorship of a pro-Israel/anti-jihad bus advertisement. The judge ordered the “Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority [to] display Plaintiffs’ advertisement no later than 5 p.m. on October 8, 2012.” The planned advertisement states, “In Any War Between the Civilized Man and the Savage, Support the Civilized Man. Support Israel. Defeat Jihad.”



United States District Court Judge Rosemary M. Collyer granted the request after AFLC Co-Founder and Senior Counsel Robert Muise presented a compelling case in which he argued that the WMATA’s refusal to run the advertisement out of a vague and speculative fear of Muslim mob violence violates AFLC’s clients’ First Amendment right to freedom of speech. The request is part of a lawsuit filed by AFLC on behalf of the bus advertisement’s sponsors, the Freedom Defense Initiative (FDI), Pamela Geller, and Robert Spencer.

Muise commented, “Today, Judge Collyer affirmed that our fundamental right to freedom of speech cannot be suppressed by mob rule. This is not only a victory for our clients, but it is a clear victory for all freedom-loving Americans.”

On September 18, 2012, the WMATA decided to delay running a pro-Israel/anti-jihad advertisement on its Metro system until some “future date” due to alleged concerns about “the situations happening around the world,” “world events,” and the “security and safety” of its passengers. The WMATA’s decision was based in response to the ongoing violence in Egypt, Libya, and elsewhere in an alleged protest of free speech in the United States that is critical of Islam. As a result of the WMATA’s censorship, AFLC filed a federal civil rights lawsuit on behalf of the advertisement's sponsors, which challenges the WMATA’s unconstitutional restriction on FDI’s right to engage in protected speech in a public forum.

AFLC Co-Founder and Senior Counsel David Yerushalmi commented: “As Judge Collyer wisely ruled, the WMATA clearly violated the Constitution. In recent weeks, sharia-adherent Muslims – foreign and domestic – have called for a ban on all speech that is critical of Islam. Unfortunately, the WMATA was quick to comply. But, our clients’ speech is protected under the First Amendment, and any efforts by Islamists and acquiescing government agencies to subvert our most fundamental freedoms must be resisted with the full force of the Constitution.”

This victory in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia follows on the heels of a New York federal judge ordering New York City’s Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) to display the same advertisement after the MTA had initially refused to run it in September 2011, claiming that the advertisement violated the MTA’s policy against displaying “images or information that demean an individual or group of individuals on account of race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, gender, age, disability or sexual orientation.” AFLC filed the New York federal lawsuit and obtained a judgment on behalf FDI, Geller, and Spencer, resulting in the advertisement running in New York City beginning on Monday, September 24<sup>th</sup>.

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](http://www.americanfreedomlawcenter.org).

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