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D.C. Federal Court to Hear AFLC’s Challenge to Transit Authority’s Restriction on Anti-Jihad Advertisement

Washington, D.C. (October 4, 2012) — Today, Robert Muise, Co-Founder and Senior Counsel of the American Freedom Law Center (AFLC), a national Judeo-Christian public interest law firm, will present oral argument in federal court in Washington, D.C. in AFLC’s request for an injunction to halt the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)’s censorship of a pro-Israel/anti-jihad bus advertisement. The hearing is before District Court Judge Rosemary M. Collyer, and it is scheduled to take place at 2:00 p.m. EDT in Courtroom 8 at the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia located at 333 Constitution Avenue, N.W., in Washington, D.C. The hearing is open to the media and the general public.

At issue in the lawsuit is the WMATA’s decision 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, the Freedom Defense Initiative (FDI) and its executive directors, Pamela Geller and Robert Spencer. The lawsuit challenges the WMATA’s unconstitutional restriction on FDI’s right to engage in protected speech in a public forum.

Muise commented: “As a government agency, the WMATA took an unprecedented and radical position by abridging our clients’ fundamental First Amendment right to engage in core political speech in a public forum simply because Muslim protestors overseas are engaging in violent behavior in response to a video that they deem to be anti-Islamic. This is known as a heckler’s veto, which is unconstitutional. The role of the government here is to protect speech, not to join a violent mob intent on suppressing speech.”

The planned advertisement states, “In Any War Between the Civilized Man and the Savage, Support the Civilized Man. Support Israel. Defeat Jihad.”



On August 29, 2012, a New York federal judge ordered the New York 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 successfully sued the MTA, and the advertisement began running in New York City on Monday, September 24.

MEDIA INFORMATION:

Senior Counsel Robert Muise will be available following the hearing for comments and questions. He may be reached at (734) 635-3756.

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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