

Court Grants Partial Dismissal of Case Against Morris Cerullo

An appeal by evangelist Morris Cerullo for immunity from litigation under the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution has been partially granted by the California 4th District Court of Appeals.

Former Morris Cerullo World Evangelism (MCWE) employee John Paul Warren had sued MCWE over numerous civil allegations that included fraud, deceit and labor claims. However, while the court dismissed some of the claims, Warren co-counsel Dean Broyles said it was not because the appeals court ruled that they were without merit. "They simply determined that under the First Amendment Ministerial Exemption they had no jurisdiction and were thus powerless to decide this case," he told Charisma.

According to Broyles, Warren's legal team "strongly disagrees" with the court's determination and is in the process of preparing an appeal to the California Supreme Court. Broyles emphasized that MCWE was "absolutely not" vindicated by the ruling.

"There is no vindication in a technical victory. For the court to say that it can't decide a case doesn't mean you've been vindicated of the charges against you. There's a huge difference," he said.

This latest ruling was the result of an attempt by Cerullo's

organization to obtain a reversal of the decision earlier last year by California Superior Court Judge Linda B. Quinn, who denied a motion by Cerullo to dismiss Warren's claims. However, there are still two complaints pending against MCWE. One concerns alleged attempts by MCWE to prevent Warren from being further employed in the Assemblies of God and the economic disadvantage he claims he suffered as a result.

The other complaint not ruled on by the superior court was Warren's belief that Cerullo was hiring him as a business "partner." MCWE maintains that all of the organization's supporters are called partners. However, Broyles told Charisma that there is evidence that what was offered to Warren "was more akin to a business partnership."

A complaint that alleged Cerullo's organization took Warren's donor list and used it to raise funds for MCWE was dismissed.

Warren, who was a former senior executive with MCWE, originally filed the suit claiming it was only after he confronted Cerullo about what Warren called "unethical and fraudulent fund-raising techniques" that he was ousted. But MCWE Vice President of Ministries Greg Mauro said all the allegations against Cerullo are false. A previous, unrelated lawsuit by another employee was settled for an undisclosed sum and an agreement of confidentiality.

Jeremy Reynolds