

Pro-life Pastor Faces Jail

Pro-life pastor Walter B. Hoye faces up to two years in prison and \$4,000 in fines at sentencing today for offering sidewalk counseling outside a California abortion clinic.

✖ **Feb. 19, 2009** – A pro-life leader faces up to two years in prison and as much as \$4,000 in fines for offering sidewalk counseling at an Oakland, Calif., abortion clinic.

Pastor Walter B. Hoye, founder of the Issues4Life Foundation, is to be sentenced today after being found guilty on Jan. 15 of “unlawful approach” under an Oakland city ordinance that bars picketers from coming within eight feet of women entering an abortion clinic.

Calling Hoye’s conviction a violation of free speech rights, black pro-life leaders traveled from across the country to attend Hoye’s sentencing. “Walter, being a pastor, the prophetic voice of God, is bringing attention to this issue,” said Stephen Broden, an African-American pastor from Dallas who arrived in Oakland earlier this week. “We who are in the black pro-life movement recognize that if they silence Walter then the potentiality for us being silenced [also exists].”

Hoye is known for standing outside an Oakland abortion clinic offering leaflets and counseling to women. According to his legal firm, he held a sign on the day of his arrest last May that read: “Jesus loves you and your baby. Please let us help.”

Prior to that arrest, Hoye was the plaintiff in a federal civil suit challenging the constitutionality of the Access to Reproductive Health Care Facilities Ordinance, the controversial law used to convict him last month in the criminal case.

Attorney Dana Cody, executive director of the Life Legal

Defense Foundation, which is representing Hoye in both cases, said the ordinance is “overbroad” because it prevents counseling on a public sidewalk. After watching three hours of videotape used to convict the pastor, Cody said it is unthinkable that Hoye might face jail time.

“Pastor Hoye was not blocking, he was being blocked by the clinic escorts. He was not harassing, he was being harassed,” she said. “Our defense was that he was acting in a lawful and peaceful manner and should not have been convicted under this ordinance.”

Pre-trial hearings in Hoye’s federal civil suit begin this spring.

Hoye told *Charisma* on Wednesday that regardless of his fate, ending abortion should be black America’s top priority.

“Every seventy-two seconds a black baby is murdered in the womb of his or her mother,” Hoye said. “I am hoping this case will create a dialogue that will strengthen the resolve of leadership in black America to fight for the lives of her children by taking a stand against abortion.”

Meanwhile Broden, who said abortion is “the No. 1 killer in the black community [and] outstrips every other pathology,” hoped to stir public sentiment in favor of Hoye, as did other black pro-life leaders such as the Rev. Johnny Hunter, president of Life Education And Resource Network (LEARN), and Levon Yuille, president of the National Black Pro-Life Congress.

“We have assembled here in Oakland to stand with Walter on the day of his sentencing to let the world know that this is something that we’re not going to stand for,” Broden said. “We’re going to resist this. We’re going to protest this. We’re going to let it be known that the church of the living God has a right to speak out and to stand up for the lives of the babies across this country.” — **Paul Steven Ghiringhelli**

