

# Can Your County Shut Down Home Bible Studies? Mine Is

I never imagined when I agreed to host a **Bible study** in my home that such an action may one day be a violation of law.

Yet that's exactly what my very own Fairfax County Board of Supervisors is prepared to do right here in Virginia.

A proposed county zoning ordinance would make it a violation to have more than a certain number of people at your home in a given period of time. Yet such an ordinance would stand as a blatant violation of the Constitution.

As Fox News explains, "The proposed zoning ordinance limits 'group assembly' at residences to 49 people a day. Such gatherings 'shall not occur more frequently than three times in any 40-day period.'"

Here's how the county explains the need:

"Over the last several years, there have been complaints from residents regarding frequent and large gatherings at neighborhood homes. These gatherings can create parking, noise, and other concerns for the neighborhood. Although occasional, large gatherings—such as private parties, house concerts, religious meetings and social clubs—are expected and permissible activities at a home, gatherings that occur on a regular basis involving numerous people can detract from the residential nature of a neighborhood because most residential structures and neighborhoods are not designed to accommodate such events."

How many complaints have there been you might ask? Six. That's right, six complaints in Virginia's most populous county.

Because six people complained, the county is poised to violate

the right to **free speech**, the right to religious expression and the right to freedom of assembly.

The county has plenty of tools in its arsenal to combat any actual problem without violating the constitutional rights of its citizenry.

If they park illegally, tow the cars. If they cause a noise violation, issue them a warning or citation. If they litter, ticket them. If they trespass or damage property, arrest them.

But don't violate my precious **First Amendment** rights to prevent something I'm not doing and which can easily be remedied in any of the above ways.

This is just more needless regulation to resolve a nonexistent problem and make violators out of otherwise law-abiding citizens.

But this won't just affect Bible studies. It will hamper birthday parties, community block parties, housewarming parties, realtors' open houses, having people over to watch the big game, and so much more. The limit is on people, not just adults. It doesn't take much for a few families to add up, and they don't have to all be at the house at the same time to be a violation—just over the course of a day. And if it could happen in Fairfax, Virginia, it could happen anywhere else.

So who's behind this measure? It was proposed, conveniently, not by any supervisor but as a board staff recommendation. Regardless of who's behind it, it's got to be stopped.

Fairfax County is accepting comments through May 30 and has dedicated its next three meetings to hearing what residents have to say about this issue. I, for one, just left this post as a comment. I have a feeling I won't be the only one.

Tonight was my first night hosting our Bible study. I don't

plan on it being my last.

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