

Court Strikes Down Abortion Buffer-Zone Law

A New Jersey federal court struck down a City of Englewood eight-foot buffer zone that prohibits pro-life speech near abortion facilities. Applying the U.S. Supreme Court's unanimous 2014 opinion in *McCullen v. Coakley*, which held unconstitutional an identically worded Massachusetts buffer zone law, the New Jersey court ruled the ordinance violates the First Amendment.

The decision provides fresh optimism for Liberty Counsel's lawsuit against the City of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, to strike down the 20-foot buffer zone ordinance passed by the City at the behest of Planned Parenthood. The Harrisburg ordinance violates the constitutional rights of Liberty Counsel's clients Becky Biter and Colleen Reilly, who are Christian sidewalk counselors being prevented from telling women about alternatives to abortion they will not hear once inside Planned Parenthood. Just as in Englewood, the Harrisburg City Council failed to consider any less restrictive alternatives to its speech ban, opting instead to become enthusiastic agents for the Planned Parenthood agenda.

Both New Jersey and Pennsylvania are in the same federal appellate jurisdiction, covered by the U.S. Third Circuit Court of Appeals, where Liberty Counsel has already secured an early victory in the Harrisburg case. The Harrisburg trial court is now bound by the favorable Third Circuit ruling as the case proceeds, and should be favorably influenced by the plainly sound reasoning of its sister court in New Jersey.

"The New Jersey decision is a great example of clear constitutional reasoning, uncorrupted by the 'abortion distortion' that has pervaded so many court decisions since *Roe v. Wade*," said Mat Staver, Founder and Chairman of

Liberty Counsel."The decision should be an encouragement to pro-life sidewalk counselors around the country, and a warning to state and local governments who increasingly abdicate their duties to uphold the constitutional rights of their citizens in order to carry water for Planned Parenthood."

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