

Boycott Leads to Shutdown of Vulgar 'Alternative' News Outlet in Minnesota

No tears were shed at the Thomas More Society when the *Star Tribune Media Company* announced on Oct. 28, 2020, that it is shutting down its four-decades-old Twin Cities "alternative" news outlet, *City Pages*.

City Pages was at the center of a Thomas More Society lawsuit in 2019, in which the not-for-profit, national public interest law firm defended the Christian Action League of Minnesota against harassment charges filed by a Twin Cities lawyer. The attorney took exception to the group's informational campaign targeting *City Pages*. The organization was reaching out to the publication's advertisers, letting them know that *City Pages* was promoting "strip clubs, porn stores and phone sex ads." The Thomas More Society was successful in defending the group against attack and the charges were dismissed.

"We won. They're done," announced Christian Action League president Ann Redding when the news broke about *City Pages* shutting down. The organization was founded in 2010 as an effort to stop *City Pages*—a free weekly magazine distributed in newsstands and restaurants—from advertising strip clubs, pornography and sex chat lines. A monthly Christian Action League newsletter identified businesses that advertised with *City Pages* or distributed the vulgar publication.

In August 2019, Redding observed that a typical *City Pages* issues was only about 36-38 pages, down from the original page counts of 65-69. Over the years, subscribers were encouraged to contact businesses that advertised in or distributed *City Pages* and urge them to end their association with the weekly rag. Redding reported that business owners would regularly

thank them for the information, and some stopped advertising in or carrying the raunchy publication.

Thomas More Society Special Counsel Erick Kaardal stated, "I want to congratulate Ann and the Christian Action League on their successful boycott of *City Pages* for its anti-women and pornographic messaging. We will not mourn the demise of this most offensive, objectionable weekly rag."

The lawsuit against Christian Action League brought attention to the organization's efforts to educate citizens regarding the destructive nature of sexual exploitation and pornography addiction, such as that fostered by *City Pages*. The Christian Action League continues to equip communities with resources to combat the devastating effects on children and families.

The Christian Action League case revolving around their *City Pages* boycott also shone the light on a Minnesota law that allows the government to issue a restraining order on "unwanted" words. This is a severe restriction on First Amendment activity. The Thomas More Society is currently involved in legal action challenging the constitutionality of this provision of Minnesota's harassment statute, and that is still in active litigation. {eo}