

Christian Preacher Sues Minnesota City Over Free-Speech Threats for Displaying Pro-Life Sign

A Minnesota city is facing a federal civil rights lawsuit after police cited a Christian street preacher for criminal trespassing when he refused to pay a vendor fee to display a pro-life sign on public property during a farmers market.

According to Fox News, the Center for American Liberty filed the lawsuit Tuesday on behalf of Bryan Conwell, alleging the City of Benson violated his First Amendment rights by requiring him to purchase a commercial license before engaging in peaceful, non-commercial speech.



Center for American Liberty

“The First Amendment doesn’t come with a price tag,” Center for American Liberty CEO Mark Trammell said in a statement. “Government officials cannot force Americans to buy a license before they peacefully express their beliefs on public property. If they can silence Bryan today, they can silence anyone tomorrow.”

The lawsuit states that Conwell, an open-air Christian preacher and pro-life advocate, typically stands quietly with signs and only speaks to those who voluntarily approach him. Court filings reportedly state he “blocks no one, threatens no one, and sells nothing. He asks only to be left alone to speak.”



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According to the lawsuit, city officials told Conwell he had to either leave the public parking lot or pay a \$20 vendor fee because organizers claimed “exclusive use” of the property. After refusing to pay, he received criminal trespassing citations on July 9 and July 16.

Fox News also reported that “officer interactions captured on video and referenced in the lawsuit show police warned Conwell that his legal woes would worsen if he continued.”

Video cited in the lawsuit shows Conwell questioning the citations, saying, “Well, legally I can be here, and that’s the whole thing. And so, I can’t be cited. So, unless there’s a crime being committed, why am I being cited?”

The lawsuit also recounts an officer expressing uncertainty about the city’s policy, telling Conwell, “To be honest, man, I want clarification too,” before adding, “I know what you’re doing, I get it. I’m glad someone is out here doing it.”

James Lasher, a seasoned writer and editor at Charisma Media, combines faith and storytelling with a journalism background from Otterbein University and ministry experience in Guatemala and at the LA Dream Center. A Marine Corps and Air Force veteran, he is the author of *The Revelation of Jesus: A Common Man’s Commentary* and a contributor to Charisma magazine. For interviews and media inquiries, please contact media@.