

Church Files Lawsuit to Ban Topless Strip Club Members

An Ohio church has filed a federal lawsuit against a strip club citing a statute used by abortion clinics against demonstrators, in the latest in a decade of protests, counter protests, suits and countersuits between the church and the club.

The suit seeks to bar the Foxhole North strip club's owner, Thomas George, and his employees from coming to church topless on Sundays to protest church members' demonstrations on Friday nights at the club.

George, defendant in the lawsuit filed by William Dunfee, pastor at New Beginnings Ministries, on Friday called the legal filing frivolous.

"Isn't that ironic that he likes to protest abortion clinics and he uses that law to fight me," George told Reuters.

The lawsuit filed by Dunfee last week, invokes the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act (FACE), a statute signed by then-President Bill Clinton in 1994 that protects both reproductive health clinics and churches from protests that would intimidate or block access.

Dunfee accuses George and his employees of intimidating and threatening congregants on Sundays at the church in Warsaw, Ohio, 60 miles northeast of Columbus.

Dunfee and his attorney did not respond to requests for comment.

George says he and some of his employee have shown up topless to the church to protest of the church's Friday-night protests at his business 9 miles away.

"What is good for the goose is good for the gander," George said. "They are no different from anyone else because of their line of work."

Authorities for the city and county of Coshocton—the club and the church are both in different towns in the same rural Ohio county—tried to bring an end to the dueling protests and lawsuits last year.

Robert Skelton, law director for the City of Coshocton, wrote to both parties saying all the actions were draining county resources.

"Police are called to the protests constantly and could be doing something a lot more important," Skelton said on Friday.

He declined to comment on the new lawsuit.

George said he quit protesting for a while. Now, in response to the lawsuit he plans to attend church on Sunday with his employees who will be without their shirts.

"I don't want to be there, the girls don't want to be there after working Saturday night, but we will be there," George said.

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