

Churches Defend Riverfront Cross Display From Liberal Attackers

Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) allied attorneys representing 10 Evansville area churches have filed a motion to intervene in an American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) lawsuit concerning the display of up to 31 temporary 6-foot-tall crosses at the Evansville riverfront being decorated by area churches to raise money for charity.

“A public display, approved in the same way as other types of displays, cannot be singled out for censorship simply because it is in the shape of a cross,” says ADF allied attorney Bryan Beauman. “The ACLU’s misinterpretation of the First Amendment should not be allowed to uproot this fundamental freedom.”

In June, the Evansville Board of Public Works approved a request by West Side Christian Church for it and up to 30 other participating churches to display painted and decorated crosses along the city’s popular riverfront for two weeks in August in an event to be known as “Cross the River.” Each participating church will paint and decorate a cross and display it during the event in an effort to raise money for local charities.

The ACLU filed a lawsuit on behalf of two Vanderburgh County residents after the city approved the churches’ permit to display the crosses.

“Religious speech is not second-class speech,” adds Chris Wischer of the Indiana law firm Bamberger, Foreman, Oswald and Hahn, LLP, who serves as co-counsel for the churches. “It is to be afforded the same First Amendment protections as any other speech.”

Michael J. Cork, also of Bamberger, Foreman, Oswald and Hahn, LLP, is one of nearly 2,300 allied attorneys with ADF and serves as local counsel for the churches seeking to intervene in *Cabal v. City of Evansville*, filed in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Indiana.

Alliance Defending Freedom is an alliance-building, nonprofit legal organization that advocates for the right of people to freely live out their faith.