

City: You Can't Sell Blueberries Unless You Affirm Gay Marriage

The Tennes family has been farming in Michigan for generations.

They grow all sorts of crops at the Country Mill Farm—organic apples, blueberries, pumpkins, sweet corn.

And for the past seven years, Steve Tennes and his family have sold their produce at the farmer's market owned by the city of East Lansing.

But this year, city officials told the devout Catholic family that their blueberries and sweet corn were not welcome at the farmer's market—and neither were they.

Last year, someone posted a message on Country Mill's Facebook page inquiring about whether they hosted same-sex weddings at the farm.

Tennes told the individual they did not permit same-sex marriages on the farm because of the family's Catholic belief that marriage is a sacramental union between one man and one woman.

City officials later discovered the Facebook posting and began immediate action to remove Country Mill from the Farmer's Market—alleging the family had violated the city's discrimination ordinance.

"It was brought to our attention that The Country Mill's general business practices do not comply with East Lansing's Civil Rights ordinances and public policy against discrimination as set forth in Chapter 22 of the City Code and outlined in the 2017 Market Vendor Guidelines, as such, The

Country Mill's presence as a vendor his prohibited by the City's Farmer's Market Vendor Guidelines," read a letter the city sent to the family.

It also did not seem to matter to city leaders that the farm is located 22 miles outside the city limits—and had absolutely nothing to do with the business of selling blueberries at the farmer's market.

"We were surprised and we were shocked," Steve told me. "My wife and I both volunteered to serve in the military—to protect freedom. Now we come home, and the freedom that we worked to protect, we have to defend in our own backyard."

I reached out to city leaders, but they did not return my calls seeking comment.

"Whether you are a Jew, Muslim or Christian—people of faith should not be eradicated from the marketplace simply because they don't share the same thoughts and ideas that the government is choosing to promote," Steve told me.

So they have decided to fight for their constitutional rights.

Alliance Defending Freedom filed a federal lawsuit Wednesday alleging East Lansing violated the constitutional rights of the Tennes family.

"All Steve wants to do is sell his food to anyone who wants to buy it, but the city isn't letting him," said ADF Legal Counsel Kate Anderson. "People of faith, like the Tennes family, should be free to live and work according to their deeply held beliefs without fear of losing their livelihood. If the government can shut down a family farmer just because of the religious views he expresses on Facebook—by denying him a license to do business and serve fresh produce to all people—then no American is free."

I warned you about this kind of attack in my new book, *The*

Deplorables' Guide to Making America Great Again. The attacks on religious liberty did not end just because a Republican is in the White House.

There is a concerted effort by the left to silence free speech and eradicate Christianity from the public marketplace. The only course of action is to stand and fight.

I commend the Tennes family and Alliance Defending Freedom for filing a lawsuit. Don't let up until every last kernel of sweet corn has been restored to its rightful place in the farmer's market.

Pray for the Tennes family and their attorneys. {eoa}