

Federal Laws Targeting Pro-Life Protesters

Conservatives and business groups often complain about the government's growing numbers of regulations. Now CBN News has learned that government officials are using lawsuits to go after American citizens.

One target can be found outside abortion clinics.

For decades, **pro-life** protesters have lined up outside abortion clinics, trying to convince women to save the lives of their unborn children.

A variety of laws have put restrictions on these protests. A major one is the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act, or FACE. Convicted protesters can face thousands of dollars in fines as well as jail time. Just the legal costs can exceed \$100,000.

The Feds have steadily stepped up the number of cases these last few years. Some consider this a blatant case of federal overreach.

"It's just a source of mischief by the federal government," **pro-life** attorney Rebecca Messall told CBN News.

Messall represents one of the Fed's targets: pro-life couple Ken and Jo Scott.

The Scotts are longtime protesters outside **Planned Parenthood** in Denver, the nation's second largest abortion clinic.

"In the old days of our country, they would throw Baptist preachers into jail for evangelizing out in the public," Messall said.

"And here it seems like a regression by this administration to

do the same thing: people out on the public sidewalk, preaching the Word of God, preaching the Bible, preaching repentance, and they're being punished for it," she added.

At taxpayer expense, the Justice Department put five federal prosecutors on the Scott case. Jo Scott settled last year but it wasn't that easy for Ken. He faced 10 charges of obstructing the entrance to the clinic's parking lot.

"They could have asked for \$10,000 for each incident, and they alleged 10 incidents over two years," Messall said.

Ken Scott acknowledged it can be intimidating.

"They're going to sue you and take your income away from you or your possessions," he said. "A lot of people are frightened of that."

Jo Scott points to the political power of Planned Parenthood's leader, Cecile Richards.

"They're trying to shut down free speech at abortion clinics, but then Cecile Richards is one of the most frequent visitors to the White House, so you know she's having an impact," Scott said.

But the Scott family has vowed to continue.

"There are babies dying right here in this Planned Parenthood," Ken Scott said. "They kill 25 to 35 a day, five days a week here."

"Jesus said, 'Because they hate me, they're going to hate you.' And it's just part of the job description. I don't feel like a victim. I belong to Jesus," his wife said.

Lately, the government is having a tough time winning some of these cases.

The Justice Department brought 10 claims against Ken Scott,

but the judge said not one of them had any merit.

A Florida federal judge recently threw out a case and accused the Justice Department of plotting with the abortion clinic targeted by the protester.

In his ruling, the judge wrote, "The Court can only wonder whether this action was the product of a concerted effort between the Government and PWC (the Presidential Women's Center), which began well before the date of the incident at issue."

Justice dropped the case and paid the protester \$120,000 in damages. As for the charge of collusion, Messall believes it's a widespread problem in these cases.

"What we learned later on was that there was a pre-commitment by the Justice Department in Washington in the Civil Rights Division to bring these cases even before they knew of the cases," she said.

And although the government isn't winning in court, the FACE Act remains on the books.

"It's dangerous in so many ways," Messall said. "And it's been used here and across the country to try to intimidate and punish people for exercising their First Amendment rights."