

# Hawaii Church Defeats Atheists in Suit That Alleged Government Fraud

A Hawaii court has dismissed two churches from a lawsuit that two atheists brought against five congregations in the Aloha State. Alliance Defending Freedom attorneys represent the two churches, One Love Ministries and Calvary Chapel Central Oahu, which the atheists falsely accused of defrauding the government.

The suit claimed the churches committed fraud by paying substandard rent to the public schools in which they meet even though the school districts agree that the churches have consistently paid all agreed-upon rents. The court found that atheists Mitchell Kahle and Holly Huber failed to sufficiently allege any evidence of fraud.

“Congregations serving the neediest in their communities should be welcomed, not driven out by bogus accusations resulting from a clear hostility to churches,” said Alliance Defending Freedom Senior Legal Counsel Erik Stanley, who argued before the court last month. “The churches have been completely honest and have paid all required rent to the schools. The court has rightly thrown out this lawsuit and its invented claims against our clients.”

“These churches have not only faithfully paid all of their rent, they’ve given even more in service and funding to the schools and communities they love,” added co-counsel James Hochberg of Honolulu, one of nearly 2,300 allied attorneys with Alliance Defending Freedom. “Honestly, these churches are the exact opposite of how they are being characterized in this baseless lawsuit. It has been a shameful attack upon people completely undeserving of such animosity.”

Kahle and Huber filed their suit, *Kahle v. New Hope International Ministries*, with Hawaii's Circuit Court of the First Circuit under the state's False Claims Act. The law allows "whistleblowers" with inside information to expose fraudulent billing by government contractors; however, the lawsuit failed to sufficiently allege that the churches submitted any false statement to defraud the government. The two atheists can amend their complaint within 45 days of the dismissal order if they are able to cite any such fraud.