

Pastor Thrown in Jail for Holding a Sign That Tells the Gruesome Truth About Abortion

Pastor Stephen Joiner was arrested and jailed for four hours simply for holding a sign stating that abortion kills children alongside a busy intersection in the city.

Now he's filing suit.

Liberty Counsel filed a federal civil rights lawsuit against the City of Columbus in Mississippi and police Capt. Frederick Shelton on behalf of Joiner.

The pastor from Church of the Nazarene in Columbus was charged with failure to obey Capt. Shelton, who ordered him to leave the area because Shelton thought he was obstructing traffic, even though Joiner was well back from the curb and peacefully holding his sign.

At trial, Shelton also claimed that Joiner had violated the city parade ordinance, even though he was standing alone at the time of his arrest. The charges were ultimately dismissed on July 25.

"The First Amendment protects the right of citizens to express themselves on the public ways free of government interference," says Mat Staver, founder and chairman of Liberty Counsel. "The city's actions were entirely unjustified and are an affront to the fundamental rights of all Americans.

"Even unpopular speech is protected when peacefully expressed, as Pastor Joiner did here," Staver says.

The lawsuit alleges that the city's parade ordinance and handbill ordinance, which contains a blanket prohibition on the distribution of literature in any public place, are both

unconstitutional. The suit also seeks a preliminary injunction to bar enforcement of the ordinances while the lawsuit is pending.