

Pro-Life Pregnancy Center Sues for Violation of Free Speech

A Montgomery County law is forcing pro-life pregnancy counselors to advise women against using their services.

Most of the law was put on hold in March 2011 by a federal district court, but the county appealed that decision.

Alliance Defense Fund (ADF) attorneys represent a Silver Spring, Md., pregnancy resource center in the lawsuit against the county. A similar law that was separately held **unconstitutional** in Baltimore was argued at the same appellate hearing on Friday at the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 4th Circuit.

“Pregnancy centers, which offer real help and hope to women, shouldn’t be punished by political allies of the **abortion industry**,” says ADF Legal Counsel Matt Bowman, co-counsel for the Centro Tepeyac Women’s Center. “Attacks on pregnancy centers are designed to distract from the growing national scandals in the abortion industry. For years, abortionists have preyed on women and girls for profit. Now pro-abortion politicians are trying to give these women fewer choices.”

Under the Montgomery County law, **pro-life pregnancy resource centers** must post signage noting that the county believes women should seek assistance elsewhere. The district court issued a preliminary injunction preventing the county from enforcing that requirement. The county intentionally crafted the law so that it doesn’t apply to pro-abortion centers, such as Planned Parenthood.

“There is no abortion exception to the **First Amendment**,” says Mark Rienzi, who argued before the court Friday as lead

counsel for Centro Tepeyac. Rienzi is an ADF-allied attorney and a law professor at Catholic University of America's Columbus School of Law. "The county has no business taking over the walls of pro-life pregnancy centers to tell women to go seek help elsewhere."

The appeals court usually rules several weeks after hearing oral arguments.