

Romanian Churches File Brief Against Illinois Governor for 'Dictatorial' Unconstitutional Discrimination

Liberty Counsel filed the reply brief to the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals on behalf of Elim Romanian Pentecostal Church and Logos Baptist Ministries in their federal lawsuit against Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker for his unconstitutional executive orders that discriminated against these churches by restricting in-person worship services. The reply brief argues that the case is not moot, even though the restrictions have been removed, because the governor could return to his unconstitutional ways without a court order restraining him.

Under Gov. Pritzker's previous executive orders, churches could have an unlimited number of people for nonreligious activities to feed, shelter and provide social services, which includes unemployment or disability counseling. However, religious gatherings, in the same church with the same people, were limited to 10.

The governor's restrictions were finally removed in May 2020 when Liberty Counsel filed a petition for an injunction pending appeal at the Supreme Court. As a result, the district court dismissed the case as moot, even though the governor argued that he should be able to impose his discriminatory orders again.

However, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Tandon v. Newsom* and *Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn v. Cuomo* that neither the easing, amending, modifying nor expiration of challenged

COVID-19 restrictions moots a plaintiff's claims if the governor retains the authority to reinstate the discriminatory restrictions at any time.

Last year, Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot engaged in mob-like thuggery against Elim Romanian Pentecostal Church when it began to meet in-person again. The aldermen sent letters to the neighbors of the church, instructing them not to park on the street from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. Even though the church has its own private parking, and their members don't park on the street, the mayor ordered "No Parking" signs and towed the neighbors' cars along the streets for nine blocks hoping to get them mad at the church. When Mayor Lightfoot realized this tactic did not work, she stationed police on a Sunday night at the entrance to the private parking lot of Elim Romanian Pentecostal Church, refusing to allow anyone to park. The police trespassed on private property and interfered with private contractual rights, not to mention grossly violating the Constitution. The city of Chicago also even threatened to bulldoze the building.

Last May, after 52 Sundays, the city of Chicago finally dismissed both "disorderly conduct and mob action" citations against Pastor Cristian Ionescu of Elim Romanian Pentecostal Church and Pastor Florin Cimpean of Philadelphia Romanian Church, which Liberty Counsel also represents, for holding a morning service and evening service on May 17, 2020. The pastors were charged for having more than 10 people in their large sanctuaries for worship. In September 2020, the city of Niles dropped all four "disorderly conduct" citations against Pastor Daniel Chiu of the Romanian church Logos Baptist Ministries. Pastor Chiu received the \$800 fine for holding peaceful morning and evening worship services for two consecutive Sundays.

"Governor J.B. Pritzker has abused and intentionally discriminated against these Romanian churches while providing preferential treatment to many secular businesses and

gatherings,” Liberty Counsel Founder and Chairman Mat Staver said. “The governor has never made it clear that he will not return to his old ways, but merely says he has not done so. It is time to shut the door so he must never be allowed to extend his dictatorial hand again.” {eo}

For the original article, visit .

Read articles like this one and other Spirit-led content in our new platform, CHARISMA PLUS.