

Veteran Arrested as Third Georgia City Persecutes Homeless Vets

A U.S. Army veteran has filed a lawsuit against a third city in Georgia after a police officer arrested him while he stood outside city hall holding a sign with the message, "God bless the homeless vets."

Jeffrey Gray filed the suit Monday against Port Wentworth Police Lt. Robert Hemminger. The filing was submitted in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Georgia, Savannah Division.

"Because it made city employees uncomfortable, a police officer told him that the sidewalks were private property and asked that he leave," explained the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression, the organization representing Gray. "When Jeff began to film the encounter and asked if he was trespassing, the police officer detained him. When Jeff refused to identify himself, saying he would rather leave, he was arrested for refusing to provide identification."

FIRE attorney Harrison Rosenthal added, "No matter how many lawsuits it takes, FIRE will zealously defend what should be an unambiguous right—to peaceably hold a sign in front of city hall. We're not just defending Gray's First Amendment rights; we're safeguarding the Constitution—a document that U.S. Army veterans, including Gray, bravely serve to protect."

The veteran's third lawsuit comes months after he took the city of Alpharetta to court, as CBN News reported. At the time, Gray told FIRE, "I have been harassed, trespassed, handcuffed, and arrested countless times for peacefully exercising my First Amendment rights."

“My intention is to ensure that all Americans from the wealthiest millionaire to the poorest homeless person can exercise these rights without fear of consequence from our government,” he said.

While the case in Alpharetta is still ongoing, city police officers have accused Gray of “panhandling” and have barred him from “continuing to engage in expressive activity.” Gray, for his part, has said he was not in any way trying to profit from the peaceful protest but was instead trying to simply convey a message.

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