

Jim Bakker Sues Arkansas AG, and Arkansas AG Sues Back

Evangelist Jim Bakker has been sued by Arkansas' attorney general, Republican Leslie Rutledge, for allegedly making a false promise that a product featured on his show could cure coronavirus. Bakker has denied these claims. Though Bakker's show is filmed in Branson, Missouri—where he has also been sued—Arkansas is involved, according to Rutledge, because 385 Arkansans bought more than \$60,000 in colloidal silver product from Bakker.

Rutledge's lawsuit comes only eight days after Bakker sued Rutledge, the city of Los Angeles and two other California counties after lawyers demanded records of his supporters' information. Bakker said such demands violated his First Amendment rights and his religious freedoms. (Rutledge has denied this, saying the lawsuit is about consumer fraud, not freedom of religion.)

Jay Nixon, attorney for Bakker and Morningside Church, emailed a statement in response to Rutledge's lawsuit Wednesday morning.

"The Arkansas attorney general's lawsuit is obviously in direct response to our prior suit seeking to protect the names, addresses and contribution histories of church members," Nixon wrote. "Through our lawsuit filed last week in federal court, we took necessary steps to protect our clients' constitutional rights, and the rights of its congregation. Attorney General Rutledge's filing today confirms that our action to prevent this type of retaliation was warranted. The Constitution, federal statutes, and prior cases clearly provide protection from this intrusion. It is important to note that Pastor Bakker never said Silver Solution prevented or cured COVID-19. Silver Solution and similar supplements are

also commonly sold at Walmart, GNC, CVS and on Amazon, without legal action from the Arkansas attorney general.”

The lawsuits center on a segment from the Feb. 12 episode of *The Jim Bakker Show*, in which Bakker hosted natural health expert Sherrill Sellman, who allegedly implied that Silver Solution could cure COVID-19, in addition to HIV, SARS and other diseases.

In the episode—which has since been removed from Bakker’s website and YouTube channel—Bakker asked Sellman, “This influenza that is now circling the globe—you’re saying that ‘Silver Solution’ would be effective?”

Sellman replied, “Well, let’s say it hasn’t been tested on this strain of the coronavirus, but it has been tested on other strains of the coronavirus and has been able to eliminate it within 12 hours. Totally eliminate it. Kills it. Deactivates it.”

She added that Silver Solution “has been proven by the government that it has the ability to kill every pathogen it has ever been tested on, including SARS and HIV.”

In March, CBS News reported that Bakker and six other companies were warned by the FTC and FDA “to stop selling unapproved products and treatments.” The Missouri attorney general’s office said that Bakker had “falsely promised to consumers that Silver Solution can cure, eliminate, kill or deactivate coronavirus and/or boost elderly consumers’ immune system and help keep them healthy when there is, in fact, no vaccine, pill, potion or other product available to treat or cure coronavirus disease 2019.” The New York attorney general’s office also sent Bakker a cease and desist order.

In response, Bakker stopped selling the product on his website in March. In May, Lori Bakker announced on Facebook that Bakker had experienced a stroke and would take a sabbatical from the show to recover.