

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Anne Gaylor Seeks Criminal Penalty Against Church Over \$6.32

WAUKESHA, Wisc. – February 1, 2007 – Michael Dean, General Counsel for First Freedoms Foundation, has issued a response to the Wisconsin Elections Board regarding complaints against his client, Pastor William Bartz of Madison's Monona Oaks Community Church. The complaints stem from a letter Pastor Bartz and members of his church distributed to Madison residents last year urging them to vote "yes" on a constitutional amendment protecting traditional marriage.

The complaints were filed in October 2006 by Anne Gaylor, co-president of the Madison-based Freedom from Religion Foundation, an atheist organization, and two Dane County voters. The complaints allege that Pastor Bartz and members of his church violated state election statutes by spending over twenty-five dollars on campaign materials without filing a campaign registration statement. Gaylor's complaint asks the Elections Board to impose any applicable fines on Pastor Bartz.

"Anne Gaylor is abusing the complaint process with her baseless allegation," said Dean. "The total cost of producing the pamphlet was \$31.62. Gaylor and her atheist organization want to silence free speech over \$6.32."

Prior to the November vote on the marriage amendment, Pastor Bartz and Monona Oaks Community Church members volunteered their time to distribute the pamphlets in neighborhoods near the Church.

"So-called unregistered citizens voluntarily distribute campaign literature to their friends and neighbors before every election, and have since the founding of our nation," said Dean. Grassroots activism starts with talking to your neighbors."

Fifty-nine percent of Wisconsin voters passed a constitutional amendment last November defining marriage as between a man and a woman.

"The complaint filed by Anne Gaylor and her self-avowed atheist organization is an attempt to suppress the constitutionally protected rights and responsibilities of Pastor Bartz and the Monona Oaks congregation, including their rights to engage in free speech and to freely exercise their religion," said Dean. "This is a tyranny of a small but vocal minority who are upset with the outcome of an election."

Gaylor also complained about a video Pastor Bartz and the Church produced for broadcast on public access channel. According to the response filed, the Church spent no funds at all to produce the program.

Dean has asked the Wisconsin Elections Board to dismiss the complaints against Pastor Bartz.

About First Freedoms Foundation

First Freedoms Foundation is a non-profit, public interest legal foundation defending conservative and traditional constitutional rights.

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