


Complaint Filed on Behalf of Firefighters Forced to Participate in San Diego's "Gay Pride" Parade

August 28, 2007

ANN ARBOR, MI – The Thomas More Law Center, a national public interest law firm based in Ann Arbor, Michigan, announced today that its West Coast Director, San Diego area attorney, Charles LiMandri, filed a sexual harassment and freedom of speech complaint  in California state court on behalf of four respected San Diego firefighters. Charles LiMandri was also the Thomas More Law Center's lead counsel in the successful Mt. Soledad Cross case in San Diego.



In July, four San Diego firefighters were ordered, against their wishes, to participate in uniform on their city fire engine in San Diego's annual "Gay Pride" parade. During the course of the ensuing three hour long ordeal, the firefighters were subjected to vile sexual taunts and gestures along the parade route. These firemen are devoted husbands and fathers. All four firemen are Christian and two are Catholic.

Charles LiMandri explains filing the complaint in state court, "These men were sexually harassed in clear violation of San Diego's sexual harassment code. Further, the California Constitution's freedom of speech provision prohibits compelled speech. What the firefighters were ordered to do was endorse what goes on at this parade through their participation in it."

Brian Rooney, spokesman for the Law Center and former San Diego resident commented, "In one regard, forcing these firefighters to participate in this parade has removed the artificial veneer of legitimacy from this event to expose it for what it truly is—a temporary suspension of decency laws in the name of inclusion and diversity. The debauched and decadent conduct at this parade clearly violates municipal codes that prohibit public nudity and obscenity. The City has played make believe long enough."

Richard Thompson, President and Chief Counsel of the Thomas More Law Center added, "There is a transvestite group dressed up as nuns that marches in this parade every year in crude mockery of the Catholic faith. No other religion would be treated this way. And for the City of San Diego to sponsor such an event and for its political leaders to endorse such behavior by their presence is outrageous. Two of the firefighters who are Catholic were forced to endorse such mockery of their faith by being forced to participate in the parade."

The so-called "gay pride" parade took place on July 21, 2007 in San Diego. On July 20, 2007, the four firefighters in question were told by their superiors that they would be participating in the parade. All four repeatedly protested that they did not wish to participate. On the morning of July 21, 2007, however, these same four firefighters were ordered to ride on a fire engine, in uniform, in the parade.

LiMandri commented, "Our complaint will show that this is not the first time that firefighters were ordered into this parade against their will and complained to the fire department. One of the main reasons for this complaint is so that no firefighter will again be forced to participate in a parade that is so sexually charged that it creates a hostile work environment. The City should be concentrating the fire department's efforts on working the parade and responding to emergencies, not putting these brave firefighters on parade to be sexually harassed." LiMandri went on to say, "We want a new policy for the Fire Department that will explicitly state that no firefighter will be ordered in the future into this type of parade again against his or her will."

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