

Mississippi Judge Tosses Two of Three Criminal Charges Against Pro-Life Sidewalk Counselor

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JACKSON – A municipal judge in Mississippi has dismissed two of three criminal charges leveled against a pro-life sidewalk counselor, and promises to rule on the remaining charge by the end of the week.

On Monday, Cal Zastrow stood trial in city court in Jackson for three misdemeanor charges incurred while conducting pro-life outreach earlier this year outside of the last remaining abortion facility in the state. Zastrow was facing

one count each of disorderly conduct, violating the city’s sign ordinance and obstructing a public sidewalk.

“The chief prosecutor for the city of Jackson was the one who argued the case against me, and they had two police officers and a police commander [testify against me],” he told Christian News Network. “I testified and one other person, a pro-lifer, testified that I had not broken any laws.”

[As previously reported](#), Zastrow was arrested on February 28th and March 1st, in part for allowing the sign he was holding to touch the ground as he stood outside of Jackson Women’s Health Organization in the state capital. He contended that there is no law prohibiting hand-held signs from resting on the pavement.

In hearing arguments for both sides, Judge Jennifer Studebaker agreed that the Jackson sign ordinance had been misapplied to Zastrow’s activities. She also dismissed the disorderly conduct charge lodged against the abortion abolitionist for “disturbing the peace.”



However, Studebaker opted to leave the obstruction charge in place for further review and consideration.

“Instead of just ruling and dismissing the other charge and finding me not guilty, she took it under advisement,” Zastrow explained. “She said that she would write her decision by the end of the week.”

He noted, however, that the most fearful aspect of the trial was when his attorney, Steve Thornton of Jackson, questioned one of the officers present about the content of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.

“The attorney asked, ‘So, you’re familiar with the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution?’ [The officer replied,] ‘Oh yes,’” Zastrow recalled. “The attorney said, ‘Can you recall the themes—the main points of the First Amendment?’ The officer said, ‘Oh yes, I can.’”

My attorney said, ‘Why don’t you tell the court what they are,’” he continued. “Well, I can’t recall all of them,’ the officer replied. ‘Okay, well, just tell us one point—just one thing that the First Amendment to the Constitution mentions,’ my attorney said. And the officer answered, ‘I guess I don’t know that right now.’”

“That was frightening,” Zastrow said. “He thinks he’s upholding the law, obeying the law and enforcing the law, but he doesn’t know any elements to the First Amendment to the Constitution.”

Zastrow stated that as he waits for the results of the final charge of obstruction, he is praying that he will be vindicated—not only for himself, but for other Christians who have also been arrested while working to save the unborn.

“I’m trusting the Lord that by Friday, this other charge will be dismissed or else I’ll be found not guilty of it,” he said. “That would help a number of other pro-lifers here in Jackson, Mississippi as well, who have been arrested on other bogus charges. So, we’re trusting the Lord that the Father will use this so that more pro-lifers can remain safely in the street to evangelize and preach and sing and pray in front of Mississippi’s last remaining surgical abortion facility.”