



Press Release

City Sued for Arresting Lawyer Who Applauded During City Council Meeting

Riverside, CA – May 16, 2014 – A lawsuit was filed against the City of Riverside for the June 25, 2013 arrest and detainment of Letitia Pepper, a lawyer who applauded during a City Council meeting and was then arrested. Pepper, who previously worked at Best, Best & Kreiger, a law firm that has represented multiple cities in lawsuits against seriously ill and disabled medical marijuana patients, began advocating on behalf of those citizens after she herself was diagnosed with a terminal illness. Papers filed in federal court by Pepper allege that anti-patient Riverside Mayor William “Rusty” Bailey was retaliating against Pepper in-part because of his long-time dislike for people prescribed medical marijuana and because Pepper had written a letter to him after he’d threatened citizens who applauded during a June 11 council meeting.

According to Pepper’s attorney, Jason Thompson, Riverside has been one of the most aggressive opponents of medical marijuana in California. Thompson explained that, despite passage of the state’s 1996 Compassionate Use Act, in May, 2013, with the help of law firm Best, Best & Kreiger, the city prevailed against a group of patients forcing them to leave the City. After winning the decision against patients, Mayor Bailey announced the city had won a “major victory” in its fight against patients. At the same time, the city announced it was shutting-down all remaining patient collectives. Thompson said that although marijuana reduces the size of cancer tumors according to the federal government’s National Cancer Institute, the City has effectively prevented thousands of its disabled and seriously ill citizens from

accessing the medicine. He also said Bailey's animus towards Ms. Pepper appeared to have grown after she wrote in defense of people the Mayor had "dressed-down" during the earlier June council meeting.

In her letter written to him two weeks before she was arrested for applauding, Pepper addressed the Mayor's approval of some people and regular attacks on others. During the earlier council meeting, video footage shows Mayor Bailey telling certain citizens they were not allowed to applaud. However, a review of the same footage shows Bailey regularly allowing applause by people he clearly favors. In her letter, Pepper referred to Mayor Bailey's selective approval and disapproval of citizens writing that the city council had become "so emboldened that it thinks it can treat audience members differently because of who they are." Pepper continued that approval based on whether a citizen agrees with the position of the Mayor or council members violates the First Amendment. No arrests or warnings for applause on issues Mayor Bailey supported or of people he favors were made during the June 11 or June 25 meetings.

The lawsuit filed by Pepper seeks an order requiring the City to follow its own rules as well as seeks money damages. Calls to the Riverside City Attorney's office and to Mayor Bailey were not returned.

Photos and Links Related to June 25, 2013 Arrest of Pepper:

<http://thirtymilesOfCorruption.com/tag/city-council/>

National Cancer Institute Report on Marijuana:

http://markets.financialcontent.com/mng-lang.pasadena/news/read/27226940/national_cancer_institute_report_deems_marijuana_effective

For more information, contact Advocates for the Disabled and Seriously Ill at (714) 931-3567.