



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Good News in Newport News

Newport News, Virginia — May 17, 2018. Today, the Center for Religious Expression (CRE) secured relief from a City of Newport News ordinance that unduly restricted Don Karns from sharing a message of God’s love on public sidewalks and ways throughout the city.

Karns wants to tell the world about God’s love, so he goes to public sidewalks in Newport News where he can reach many people. For Karns, this message requires that he address people in a loving and conversational tone and avoid the appearance that he is yelling at people. To enable him to be heard in this manner over significant downtown noise, Karns has used a personal amplifier set to a reasonable volume. But, on three separate occasions, Newport News police issued Karns criminal citations for doing so, asserting that it is a crime to speak so as to be audible 50 feet away while using an amplifier, and assuring they would continue to restrict Karns’ speech similarly in the future.

Karns tried to comply with the police’s warning, but few could hear his message unless he raised his voice and tone, distorting his message. With no other option, Karns contacted CRE, which sent a letter on his behalf to Newport News officials, pointing out the constitutional infirmity of Newport News’ ordinance, and asking that they allow Karns to use his amplifier at a reasonable volume. Fortunately, Newport News heeded CRE’s request, sending a letter indicating that it would suspend enforcement of its ordinance and work to revise the ordinance to comport with constitutional rights.

“Free speech would be meaningless without a right to be heard.” said CRE Chief Counsel Nate Kellum. “Karns is now free to share the Good News in Newport News.”

Center for Religious Expression is a servant-oriented, non-profit 501(c)(3) Christian legal organization dedicated to the glory of God and the religious freedom of His people. For more information, visit <http://www.crelaw.org>.