

City of Moscow Waste Tax Payers Money on Defending Unconstitutional COVID Mandates

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- Mediation Settlement Awards Defendants \$300,000.
- City of Moscow acted unlawfully in arresting and charging protesters.
- Tax Payers Pay the Price of the City of Moscow's Religious Discrimination.
- Constitutional rights cannot be suspended during a pandemic.

[Moscow, Idaho] – On June 2, 2023 mediation settlement awarded Gabriel Rench *et al* \$300,000 for violating their constitutional rights for the illegal arrest on September 23rd, 2020. City of Moscow which included Moscow City supervisor Gary Riedner, city attorneys Mia Bautista and Elizabeth Warner, Moscow Chief of Police James Fry, and Will Krasselt, Megan Vincello, and Jake Lee all signed the settlement in defeat.

Gabriel Rench said “I am glad this shameful saga is over, but unfortunately at a high cost to the city taxpayers. I estimate that the city spent about \$500,000 of city resources on this fight, including the mediated settlement. I came to Moscow in 2002 to attend University of Idaho and have witnessed consistent religious discrimination to my church and members of the Christian community by the city of Moscow and the liberal cult that surrounds their agenda. To make matters worse, they are continuing to harass members of the Christian community by the ongoing legal harassment of what is now known as StickerGate. The city knew they were going to lose my case, so they decided to target high school kids protesting my arrest for posting free speech stickers on city poles. Why were these high school kids the only ones cited with 12 misdemeanors and not the thousands of others who also posted similar stickers? I think we all know the answer to that. It is sad that we have to appeal to the legal system outside of the City of Moscow to get real justice”

Gabriel went on to say: “The liberal cult that runs Moscow has twisted city code and crafted unconstitutional emergency health orders that act like modern Jim Crow laws targeted to harass members of our Christian community and this discrimination needs to stop.”

The City of Moscow originally violated the court order settlement and had to enter into a second round of negotiations to finalize the settlement. The city leadership throughout this process showed little concern for the law and common decency. When Gabriel Rench met with Officer Krasselt after the criminal complaint was dropped, Krasselt said he would do it all over again if he was put back in that same situation. City Council member Gina Taruscio setup a meeting and then canceled it, and later banned Gabriel from her Facebook page. Current Mayor Art Bettge refused to meet with Gabriel throughout this ordeal. During depositions it was revealed through text messages that

the City of Moscow prosecuting attorney under Mia Batista's office, Liz Warner, used bigoted hate speech when referring to Gabriel and the Christian community in Moscow.

Back in February, Judge England ordered a settlement conference, which he has offered to oversee: "Given that Plaintiffs were wrongfully arrested, the City indisputably erred in interpreting its own Code, the City consequently misadvised its officers as to the Code's application, and Plaintiffs are so far reasonable in their damage requests, this case should not need to see the inside of a courtroom."

The arrests happened on September 23rd, 2020 at a psalm sing protest in the parking lot of City Hall. The protest had been organized by Christ Church, where Gabriel Rensch was a deacon, and the ensuing news coverage spread far and wide, even to President Trump's twitter feed. Many around the country were outraged by the decision of MPD to arrest peaceful protestors, while others raged at Christ Church for behaving, they believed, unlawfully and unsafely. Since that time, Christ Church has proven to have been right about the flawed science behind Moscow's COVID orders, and now they have proven to have been right on the law as well. Their psalm sing was constitutionally protected "expressive and associative conduct" and officers did not even have grounds to ask for the ID of participants, let alone make arrests.