



# Florida Family Policy Council

## MEDIA ADVISORY ALERT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 26, 2007

### **Policy Council brings civil rights suit against Broward County and City of Sunrise Police Officer for violating First Amendment Right to collect Pro-Marriage Amendment Petitions**



(ORLANDO, FL) The Florida Family Policy Council has filed a [lawsuit](#) in Federal District Court to seek a judgment against Broward County and the Sunrise Police Officer who violated the civil rights of volunteers for the Florida4Marriage.org amendment last summer.

In June of 2006, Florida Family Policy Council staff members and volunteers were collecting petitions for the Florida Marriage Protection Amendment as a paid exhibitor under a tent with several

other ministries at a Promise

Keepers Conference in Sunrise, Florida. What began as a productive day of distributing information and collecting petitions turned into a constitutional showdown when several officers from the Sunrise Police Department showed up and shut down the gathering of petitions.

The officer in charge, Sergeant Stephen Allen, took it upon himself to lecture the petition collectors on Jesus' view of homosexuality and the Bible's instruction to obey authorities, all the while refusing to produce the legal basis for denying the volunteers' right to collect petitions for Florida4Marriage.org. To add insult, after removing the Florida4Marriage.org petitions from the exhibit table, Sgt. Allen mockingly [kissed another male officer](#).

"We have the highest regard for law enforcement officers in this state who lay down their lives to protect us everyday. But we are simply not going to be discriminated against because certain bad cops do not like our message. This was a blatant violation of the first amendment," said FFPC president John Stemberger, who was personally threatened with arrest by Sgt. Allen if the petitions remained on the exhibit table.

"We had paid a fee to be an exhibitor and had full rights to distribute literature and collect petitions," said Stemberger. "The officer in charge appeared to have a personal agenda and displayed a lack of professionalism as well as an utter disregard for our constitutional rights."

Despite these types of intimidation tactics and threats, the Florida4Marriage.org effort continues to move forward. Approximately 21,000 more petitions are needed to reach the required 611,009 petitions to place the amendment on the 2008 ballot. Current information about the citizens initiative can be found online at [www.Florida4Marriage.org](http://www.Florida4Marriage.org).

A Complete Copy of the Complaint in this case can be found in the "lawsuit" hyperlink link above or on our website Newsroom tab at [www.FLfamily.org](http://www.FLfamily.org) For More Info Contact 407-251-1957 or send a e-mail to [Media@FLfamily.org](mailto:Media@FLfamily.org)

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