



Praying Pro-life Student Arrested in Chicago

On Saturday, July 3, 25-year-old Northwestern University graduate student Joseph Holland was arrested in downtown Chicago for praying the rosary outside a Planned Parenthood facility. The accusation was that he had violated the city's new "Bubble Zone" ordinance.

This law is an expansion of Chicago's Disorderly Conduct Ordinance, with the zone being a restricted area. The newly added section, primarily sponsored by Alderman Vi Daley (D-43rd Ward), reads as follows:

A person commits disorderly conduct when (s)he knowingly either:

- (1) approaches another person within eight feet of such person, unless such other person consents, for the purpose of passing a leaflet or handbill to, displaying a sign to, or engaging in oral protest, education, or counseling with such other person in the public way within a radius of 50 feet from any entrance door to a hospital, medical clinic or health care facility, or
- (2) by force or threat of force or by physical obstruction, intentionally injures, intimidates or interferes with or attempts to injure, intimidate or interfere with any person entering or leaving any hospital, medical clinic or health care facility.

Each offense comes with a fine of not more than \$500.

The key word in the new ordinance is approach especially approach without consent. In the following [video](#), the defendant, who is wearing the baseball cap, is simply praying out loud with others; he is not seen bothering or approaching anybody.

However, one of the Planned Parenthood helpers, who are wearing the vests marked Volunteers, staged a moment by moving within eight feet of Holland. This provided the rationale for the arrest of Holland, despite the fact that he was not the one who did the approaching. Holland was given no first warning nor even just the stated \$500 fine. (There was a similar arrest a few days later of another abortion protester there.)

In an August 3 interview on [Fox News](#), Holland said that he had finished praying and was preparing to leave when a policeman accosted him. After several months of the ordinance being in effect but not stopping the pro-life advocates from praying on a public sidewalk outside of Planned Parenthood, the abortion provider evidently decided to be more pro-active. Chicago pro-lifers feel that Planned Parenthood is attempting to intimidate them with these specious, illegal arrests.

When the Bubble Law was passed in Chicago last fall, Planned Parenthood of Illinois President and CEO Steve Trombly [stated](#) their approval in a news release, saying, We have no issue with peaceful protests, praying or sidewalk counseling as long as it does not block the clinic entrance or in other ways



Written by [Mary McHugh](#) on August 4, 2010

interfere with patients or staff. The problem is overt, in-your-face tactics that Planned Parenthoods patients and staff endure regularly.

Letting alone what inside these buildings the unborn endure regularly, Mr. Trombleys truce with praying was short lived. According to Joseph Hollands [account](#), as reported by Fox News:

“I was just standing by the building praying the rosary and one of the Planned Parenthood volunteers came up to me and started yelling at me that I needed to move 8 feet away, but the thing is I didn’t actually approach anyone; I was just standing by the building and the building doesn’t actually have a bubble,” Holland told FoxNews.com.

Holland said he never responded to that volunteer or said a word to any Planned Parenthood staffers or anyone entering the building, but he still got arrested.

“I tried to talk to the officer first and explain that the building doesn’t have an 8-foot bubble and that I didn’t talk to anyone,” Holland said. “I said, ‘I’m praying, I’m praying to God, not talking to people’ and basically he said me praying was a type of approaching people and violated the bubble zone ordinance.”

Peter Breen, who is Hollands attorney from the Thomas More Society, explained that since the volunteer approached Holland and not the other way around, Holland could not have had violated the ordinance no matter how close to him she stood.

Said Holland ruefully, it looks like we’re going to have a jury trial for a \$500 max fine for violating a city ordinance that I clearly didn’t violate. Seems like a big waste of taxpayer money to me, but if that’s what we have to do to show that people are being targeted for violating a city ordinance that they’re not actually violating, then I guess that’s what we have to do.”

Update: *Charges against Joseph Holland were dismissed on August 3 after work by the Thomas More Society attorneys. “We are pleased that the City of Chicago has dismissed these false and baseless charges against Joe Holland,” said Peter Breen, Thomas More Society executive director and legal counsel. “The First Amendment protects prayer on a public sidewalk in Chicago the same as in any other city in the country.”*

Thumbnail photo (from video): Joseph Holland



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