



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on January 31, 2023

Pro-lifer Mark Houck Acquitted by Federal Jury in Politically Motivated Trial

A Pennsylvania man arrested in a dawn raid last fall was acquitted Monday of charges that he had pushed a Philadelphia abortion-clinic escort because he didn't like the function that the man was performing.

The Department of Justice (DOJ) charged Mark Houck, a Catholic sidewalk counselor and father of seven, with two violations of the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances (FACE) Act for allegedly shoving abortion escort Bruce Love in 2021 purely out of anti-abortion animus.

Houck's attorneys countered that their client had responded physically to Love only after the latter repeatedly, and over Houck's objections, verbally harassed Houck's then-12-year-old son, who was accompanying him.

During the trial, which began last Tuesday, "Houck consistently stated that he simply pushed the 'escort' 'because he was harassing my 12-year-old boy,'" reported [LifeSiteNews](#).

Of course, such a minor altercation between two men should never have reached federal court in the first place — and wouldn't have, if not for the FACE Act and the Biden administration's pro-abortion fervor.

In fact, as [The New American](#) reported, the evidence was so scant that police declined to pursue the case when called about the incident, and Love's criminal complaint against Houck in Philadelphia Municipal Court was dismissed when Love failed to appear for hearings.

That should have been the end of the matter, but six days later, Houck received a letter from the DOJ informing him that he was the target of a federal grand-jury investigation. Although Houck immediately responded through his attorneys, he heard nothing more from the feds until the morning of September 23, 2022, when about two dozen armed Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents surrounded his Kintnersville residence, pounded on the door, and demanded entry. After Houck opened the door, the agents pointed their rifles at him and his family.

"The kids were all just screaming. It was all just very scary and traumatic," Houck's wife, Ryan-Marie, told [LifeSiteNews](#).

Arrested and charged under the FACE Act, Houck could have faced 11 years in prison and a \$350,000 fine if convicted.

According to [LifeSiteNews](#), prosecutors "grilled Houck on his religious beliefs" and "on his sidewalk counseling and his ministry, The King's Men, which helps men overcome pornography addiction." They



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Mark Houck



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also suggested that Houck had said abortion escorts are murderers and have a “special place in hell,” all of which Houck denied.

Fortunately, Houck’s lawyers, assisted by attorneys from the Thomas More Society, were able to convince the jury that he was not the monster that the DOJ had made him out to be and, perhaps, that he was being prosecuted for political reasons.

“The defense team,” wrote LifeSiteNews, “presented evidence ... indicating that the FACE Act was never intended to cover abortion ‘escorts.’ Democratic Sen. Ted Kennedy of Massachusetts, chief sponsor of the legislation, had clearly stated that ‘Demonstrators, clinic defenders, escorts, and other persons not involved in obtaining or providing services in the facility may not bring such a cause of action.’”

Defense attorney Brian McMonagle also explained that “the Planned Parenthood ‘escort’ manual explicitly forbids the volunteers from engaging in altercations with protesters” and, further, “that the CEO of the local Planned Parenthood chapter wanted Love pulled from his rotation because of his failures to abide by the policy,” noted LifeSiteNews.

“Pointing out that the Biden administration’s DOJ didn’t take up the case until a year after it occurred, McMonagle said ‘you’re darn right’ the prosecution of Houck ‘has to do with politics,’” wrote the website.

The trial ended Friday, but the jury deadlocked, and court was adjourned until Monday. Even then, it took the replacement of one of the jurors with an alternate partway through the day for the panel to arrive at its verdict: not guilty on both counts.

“Mark and his family are now free of the cloud that the Biden administration threw upon them,” said Thomas More Society Executive Vice President and Head of Litigation Peter Breen. “We took on the Goliath — the full might of the United States government — and won. The jury saw through and rejected the prosecution’s discriminatory case, which was harassment from day one. The Biden Department of Justice’s intimidation against pro-life people and people of faith has been put in its place.”



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