

Remarks to the Aurora City Council, November 13, 2007

I'm Eric Scheidler and I live at 839 Garfield Avenue in the 4th Ward.

I am here today to inform this Council about ongoing violations of pro-life citizens' First Amendment rights here in Aurora. Some examples:

This past Saturday, **November 10**, an Aurora police officer told a pro-life counselor at the Planned Parenthood site on the east side of town that he could not say, "You are going to kill your baby," to women going into the facility.

Even pro-life activists might debate the prudence of addressing those particular words to an abortion-bound mother. They may strike some on this Council as inappropriate, even crude.

Never the less, those words are Constitutionally protected. It is a violation of the First Amendment for a police officer to instruct a pro-life counselor not to say them.

On **October 27**, near the end of a rally at the Planned Parenthood site, pro-lifers gathered in the long, narrow right-of-way along the west side of Oakhurst for the concluding talks. Some chose to stand across the street to hear and see better.

Police then blocked off this section of Oakhurst. Many in the crowd assumed they had done so to facilitate their hearing the speakers. They stepped into the street.

But then police demanded that everyone move to the west side of Oakhurst, under orders of Police Chief Powell and Corporation Counsel Weingartz, who had just arrived. The scene, which until then had been quite orderly, became chaotic, as police issued their confusing instructions at the behest of Powell and Weingartz.

Most outrageously, several people were told to vacate the east side of Oakhurst or be arrested for violating Aurora's ordinance against picketing a residence! Clearly they were doing no such thing.

On **October 23**, while waiting in violation of the Open Meetings Act to be allowed into the Aldermen's Office for the Government Operations Committee meeting, I was upbraided by counselor Weingartz for taking her photo as she came down the block—a public official arriving via a public sidewalk for a public meeting.

These are just a few of the most recent incidents whereby the City of Aurora has failed to respect our First Amendment rights over the past three months—all of which will be presented tomorrow to Federal Judge Virginia Kendall in our amended complaint against the city.

I know there are some on this Council who, while opposing our position on abortion, believe strongly in free speech and basic fairness. I'm sure that all of you would like to spare the city a judgment in federal court that would further tarnish Aurora's reputation.

I am asking you to what you can on this Council, in your committees and in your wards to teach the City of Aurora to respect the rights of the pro-life community.

As long as Planned Parenthood remains open, we will be out there, and in here, praying and protesting. We're here to stay. We're here for life.