

Civil Liberties Defense Center

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CITY OF EUGENE WITHDRAWS APPEAL MUNICIPAL COURT DECISION STANDS REGARDING CITY OF EUGENE V. PERRY PATTERSON

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Judge Rasmussen of Lane County Circuit Court signed an order today, May 11, 2006, dismissing the appeal of the *City of Eugene v. Perry Patterson*. On September 17, 2004, black-clad government operatives unlawfully removed Eugene citizen Perry Patterson from a "City of Eugene Welcomes Dick Cheney" rally that was held at the Monaco Coach hangar leased by the City of Eugene. Her "crime" was daring to utter the word "No" in response to a statement Cheney made where he asserted that "the world is a safer place because of the war in Iraq." Ms. Patterson, a private person who has two draft-aged sons, emotionally responded to Cheney's statement while the crowd chanted "four more years, four more years!" Eugene Police subsequently arrested and handcuffed her, and the City prosecuted her for criminal trespass in the second degree.

Her attorney, Lauren Regan of the Civil Liberties Defense Center, filed court documents alleging that Patterson's prosecution was unconstitutional. On September 20, 2005, Eugene Municipal Court Judge Alan Leiman agreed and ruled that the City and Cheney operatives did not have the authority to remove Ms. Patterson under the circumstances presented. The City of Eugene appealed the decision to the Lane County Circuit Court, which is a rarely exercised right of the municipality. During the prosecution, the City represented that the Secret Service had removed Ms. Patterson from the event. Later it was discovered that private operatives, "brownshirts," who work directly for the Bush/Cheney campaign and had no lawful authority to remove anyone, were responsible for physically removing her in order to assure good media coverage.

"Our country was founded on dissent and without it, our democracy and the values we strongly believe in will be destroyed. We regret that the City of Eugene wasted taxpayer resources in prosecuting Ms. Patterson in this case, but are appreciative of the fair ruling issued by Judge Leiman," stated attorney Lauren Regan of the CLDC. "Ms. Patterson and I hope that the City will exercise better judgment when it pertains to the

vital First Amendment rights of its citizens and are also very thankful for all of the strong community support that has been shown in this matter. The CLDC feels very strongly that particularly in times of war and conflict that the people of this nation be permitted to express their opinions to the broadest extent possible. The CLDC intends to form a working group to consider how we can best defend our civil liberties during these troubling times so that incidents like what happened to Ms. Patterson won't occur again in our communities."

Ms. Patterson's case was one of several cases across the country demonstrating a repugnant pattern in which the Bush administration has blatantly attempted to censor any dissenting viewpoints. In November of 2005, three Denver, CO, residents were removed from a social security forum hosted by President Bush. Bush agents apparently observed a sticker on the car of one of the residents that said "No Blood for Oil." A bumper sticker was the reason the three Americans were unconstitutionally denied the opportunity to hear the president of the United States speak on the topic of social security. In Arizona, 19 year old Steven Gerner was also denied access to a social security forum hosted by the Bush administration. The reason: Steven was wearing a University of Arizona Young Democrats t-shirt. Apparently according to the Bush administration, if you are not in total agreement with the government's positions, you are not welcome to participate in democracy. "This should be a very troubling position for all Americans as we claim to be at war in Iraq for the pursuit of democracy and our leaders continue to deny democracy to their own citizens." Regan concluded.