



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on February 15, 2024

Court Rules Realtor's Claim That "Jesus Loves You" Is Not Discriminatory

A law in Virginia enforced by the Virginia Real Estate Board (VREB) [was struck down](#) last month as being presumably discriminatory.

A statement by a former Realtor in Midlothian, Virginia, that "God comes first" on her website and on her letterhead cannot be presumed that she only loves Christians and will likely discriminate against everyone else.

The law reads:

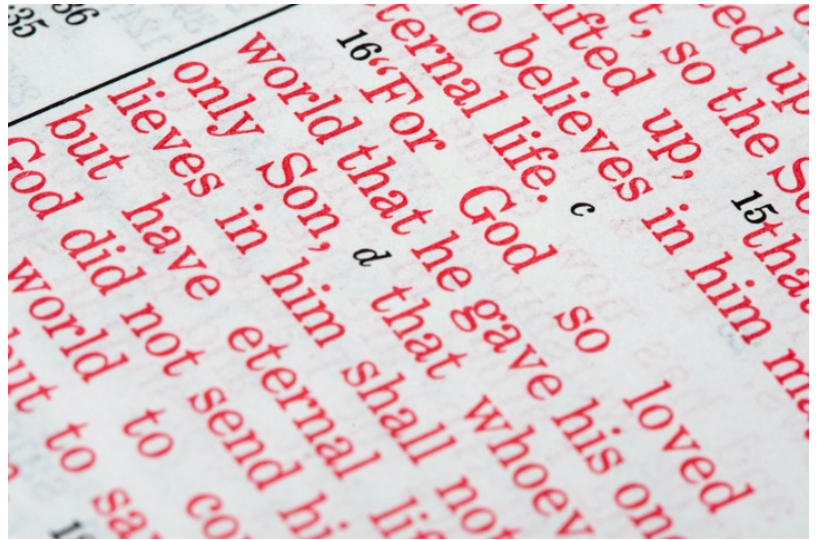
It shall be an unlawful discriminatory housing practice for any person: ... To make, print, or publish, or cause to be made, printed, or published any notice, statement, or advertisement, with respect to the sale or rental of a dwelling that indicates any preference, limitation, or discrimination or an intention to make any such preference, limitation or discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, elderliness, familial status, or handicap.

The use of words or symbols associated with a particular religion, national origin, sex, or race shall be prima facie evidence of an illegal preference under this chapter which shall not be overcome by a general disclaimer.

As applied to former Realtor Hadassah Carter, the law reads:

It shall be an unlawful discriminatory housing practice for [her] ... to ... publish ... any ... statement ... that indicates any preference ... based on ... religion....

Until 2017 Carter had exercised her First Amendment rights by publishing this as part of her email signature:



markgoddard/iStock/Getty Images Plus



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For Faith and Freedom, Jesus loves you, and with God all things are possible.

On her business website she published:

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. John 3:16

And in her bio and statement of her core values she wrote this:

My goal is to open the doors to the home of my client's dreams, and to establish Relationships that will last a lifetime. It is people who are important to me....

God comes first and equal to Him, my Clients come first. I am dedicated to making the dreams of families come true across the State of Virginia, and those relocating around the World. I am dedicated with true devotion to serving GOD and helping people....

When the VREB discovered Carter's bold statement of faith, the roof caved in on her. An investigation was begun, and she was told in no uncertain terms to eliminate all references to the Almighty or face charges.

The ridiculousness of this was exposed by John Monaghan, writing for the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ), which assisted Carter on her tortuous journey through the courts:

The VREB actually thinks that John 3:16 ... can violate the Virginia Fair Housing Act [VFHA] because [it assumes Carter will exercise] a preference to sell or rent based on religion. In short, the VREB is engaging in discrimination in order to prevent discrimination.

The logic escapes me.

Carter's initial complaint, filed in 2019, sought a permanent injunction against the VREB and the State of Virginia on the basis that the law, and its enforcement, violated Carter's right to free speech, her free exercise of religion, and lack of due process.

The state struck back, demanding her complaint be dismissed. That effort failed, and her complaint moved forward. Last June the ACLJ filed a motion for summary judgment, and on January 24 it was granted. Judge Tracy Thorne-Begland wrote:

Accordingly, Plaintiff's [Carter's] motion for summary judgment is granted.

The court finds the portion of [the Virginia law] presuming unlawful animus [i.e., presumptive malevolent ill will on the part of Carter] due to the mere use of words or symbols associated with a particular religion, national origin, sex, or race, to be an unconstitutional abridgement of the rights to speech and expression established by the First Amendment.

Writing again for the ACLJ, Monaghan called the decision a victory:

With this victory, not only is our client free to include "Jesus loves you" and John 3:16 in her



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materials, but it is a massive win for every Christian realtor in the state.

Expressions of faith are no longer banned in the real estate profession in Virginia.



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