



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on May 25, 2018

Pro-life Activist Falsely Accused of Making Terrorist Threats Found “Not Guilty”

On Wednesday, a Missouri state court jury found pro-life activist John Ryan not guilty of what appeared to be false charges that he made a terrorist threat against a Planned Parenthood clinic. The trial lasted just three days, with the jury deliberating for only an hour before reaching their verdict in a case that critics claim was merely an attempt to stifle the free-speech rights of pro-life advocates.



On December 31, 2016, a Planned Parenthood clinic worker, Casey Spiegel, claimed that during a brief conversation with Ryan, Ryan made threats stating there were seven bombs inside of the building. Ryan was often at the clinic offering assistance to women seeking abortions, including alternative options, according to *LifeNews*.

Ryan claimed that what he actually said to the worker was, “How would you like to bring in the New Year with a new job? You didn’t dream of working at an abortion mill when you were a little girl. No little girl dreams of that. What happened to that little girl?”

The truthfulness of Spiegel’s allegation was called into question rather [immediately](#), however. Following the alleged threat, the abortion facility was searched by police but was not evacuated, despite the seriousness of the alleged threat. In fact, the Planned Parenthood clinic continued to treat patients during the search.

Likewise, several witnesses claimed Ryan had not made any threatening remarks. CCTV video footage of the encounter, which does not have audio, revealed that Spiegel was unmoved and appeared unperturbed by whatever Ryan had said during their conversation, further calling into question whether a threat had actually been made.

Brad Blake, special counsel for The Thomas More Society, who represented Ryan, noted, “When you see the [video of the entire encounter](#), it is clear that the accusing witness, carrying a yellow shoulder bag, had zero reaction when Mr. Ryan, in the yellow jacket, was speaking to her. Her lack of reaction speaks louder than words.”

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A St. Louis grand jury refused to indict Ryan, and by April 2017, the felony charges against him had been dropped, but a new misdemeanor case was filed in its place. Prosecutor Kim Gardner’s office did not offer an explanation, except to say that further investigation revealed that a misdemeanor was a more appropriate charge based on the facts of the case.

Ryan maintained his innocence and even agreed to — and passed — a polygraph test, but Gardner’s office persisted in pursuing a case against Ryan.

Blake observed, “The grand jury gave her a no-true bill with insufficient evidence, and she instructed her staff to issue a misdemeanor.”



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Critics claim that the allegations were levied simply to provide an opportunity to violate Ryan's First Amendment-protected rights. In January 2017, Planned Parenthood petitioned for a restraining order against Ryan to keep him 150 feet away from several offices in the area, though the petition had later been dismissed.

Additionally, the St. Louis Board of Aldermen attempted to use the case to advocate for a buffer zone around "healthcare" facilities such as Planned Parenthood. The bill would have created an eight-foot buffer zone around driveway entrances and within a public right-of-way or sidewalk. The *River Front Times* reported that the effort to pass the bill lasted several sessions before ultimately failing earlier this year.

Ryan believed that he was being used as the catalyst to promote the bill. He argued, "Alderwomen Megan Green and Christine Ingrassia used this so-called terrorist threat as one of the main reasons a buffer zone bill was needed. The campaign to pass the buffer zone ordinance was based on a lie."

Green repeatedly cited the charges against Ryan as fuel for the buffer zone bill, the *Daily Caller* writes. Blake contends that regardless of the outcome, Planned Parenthood and Gardner's office had succeeded in stifling Ryan's First Amendment-guaranteed rights in the 17 months since the accusation.

"This criminal charge, with its attendant bond restrictions that keep John away from the Planned Parenthood facilities, succeeded in muzzling him and depriving him of his First Amendment rights to use the public sidewalk, as he had for years previously, to voice his pro-life message," he asserts. "This deprivation of his free speech rights was based on bogus allegations by Planned Parenthood that were then advanced by Prosecutor Kim Gardner's office."

Beyond that, Ryan believes his reputation has been permanently tarnished as a result of the false accusations, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* reports.

"Planned Parenthood and prosecutor Kim Gardner's office branded me a felony terrorist 17 months ago, and that is permanently imprinted on the Internet forever," Ryan said, according to a Thursday press release.



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