

St. Louis Jury Acquits John Ryan in Planned Parenthood “Terrorist Threat” Case

A state court jury of eight women and four men found pro-life activist John Ryan not guilty of 17-month old charges that he had made a terrorist threat. At the end of a three-day trial, the jury deliberated for about an hour before reaching its verdict Wednesday afternoon, May 23, 2018.

The charges arose when Casey Spiegel, a Planned Parenthood employee, reported that as she walked toward Ryan at the entry to Planned Parenthood’s parking lot on December 31, 2016, he told her there were seven bombs in the building. Police arrested Ryan on the scene and held him for 35 hours, when he was released on bond.

The Prosecuting Attorney for the City of St. Louis filed felony charges against Ryan, accusing him of making terrorist threats. A St. Louis grand jury refused to indict Ryan (**add link to the dismissal—see attached**), at which point, on April 7, 2017, Prosecutor Kim Gardner’s office refiled the case with an information, which bypasses the grand jury.

“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, but I am grateful that a jury saw through these lies and deliberated only an hour to acquit me,” Ryan said. “Actually, two juries have cleared me on these charges—first the grand jury and now the trial jury.”

The charges against Ryan, originally filed in January 2017, were cited repeatedly by sponsors and supporters (including Planned Parenthood) of the Board of Aldermen’s so-called “buffer zone” bill, which would have kept sidewalk counselors and protestors opposing abortion a set distance away from the driveway into Planned Parenthood’s parking lot and building. Sidewalk counselors and protestors claim the right to access the part of the driveway that crosses a public sidewalk.

Ryan noted that “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.”

Brad Blake, Special Counsel for The Thomas More Society in Chicago who represented Ryan, noted, “When you see the video of the entire encounter (https://www.dropbox.com/s/eyybuishwc389i6/FOREST%20PARK%20-%20BOYLE-2016-12-31_08h49min00s000ms.asf?dl=0), 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 actions – or lack of reaction – speak louder than words.

“This criminal charge, with its attendant bond restrictions keeping Ryan away from the Planned Parenthood facilities, succeeded in muzzling John 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. This deprivation of John’s free speech rights was based on bogus allegations by Planned Parenthood that were then advanced by Prosecutor Kim Gardner’s office.”

Blake, a former prosecutor himself, added, “It made no sense to me that Kim Gardner’s office persisted with this case after the Grand Jury refused to indict Mr. Ryan based on insufficient evidence and he passed a polygraph.”