

April 23, 2009

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

S&G Provides RLUIPA Training to Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County

On April 16 and 17, 2009, S&G attorney Roman P. Storzer provided two sessions of training to City of Nashville officials and attorneys. The training was provided to the Metropolitan Council, the Director of Council Staff, attorneys that advise the Metropolitan Council on land use, Metropolitan Planning Commissioners, the Zoning Administrator, members of the Board of Zoning Appeals, and other staff.

The training was the result of a consent decree ([available here](#)) entered into by the City and the USDOJ in a civil rights lawsuit brought against the City. Under the terms of the settlement, approved by the court on January 30, 2009, the City agreed to rescind the zoning amendment that had barred a religious organization's land use and adopted a reasonable accommodation policy for persons with disabilities. The settlement required designation of an FHA and RLUIPA compliance officer, training for employees on the requirements of these two civil rights statutes, and monetary payments to the organization and the United States.

More information about the case is available [here](#) and [here](#). According to the [U.S. Department of Justice](#):

On January 29, the Department of Justice reached a consent decree in its civil rights suit alleging that the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, Tennessee unlawfully denied zoning approval to a Christian substance abuse program. The suit alleged that the Metropolitan Government discriminated against Teen Challenge and its clients based on disability in violation of the Fair Housing Act (FHA) and imposed a substantial burden on their religious exercise in violation of the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA), when it barred the group from building a residential treatment facility.

The April 16 training session was held in the Metro Council Chamber and the April 17 session was held at the Metro Southeast Facility on Murfreesboro Road.

"A proactive approach to defending civil rights is clearly preferable to litigation," said attorney Roman Storzer. "Local governments need the tools to deal with potentially controversial religious land uses in a manner that avoids discrimination and undue burden."

The attorneys of Storzer and Greene, P.L.L.C. have represented scores of religious organizations in land use conflicts from Hawaii to Florida. Mr. Storzer has been described by the Religion Newswriters Association as "one of the country's most experienced litigators" in religious land use law, and has successfully represented Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Native American, Sikh and other faith groups in RLUIPA and First Amendment cases throughout the nation.

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