

Chesterfield's war on fortune-tellers

December 21, 2009 by Al Harris



A Chesterfield tarot card reader and spiritual counselor has filed a federal lawsuit alleging that the county has violated her constitutional rights after misclassifying her business and denying her a license.

From the Courthouse News Service:

In her federal complaint, Sophie King says she is "not interested in future events," but offers spiritual counseling through "tarot, Reiki, energy healing, astrology and psychic, clairvoyant, clairaudient, and medium abilities."

She claims Chesterfield County unconstitutionally classifies her as "engaged in the occupation of occult sciences," and subject to its business tax and zoning rules. King says the tax is excessive and violates her First Amendment rights. She points out that other businesses, including itinerant merchants and peddlers, adult businesses and nightclubs pay significantly less in taxes.

"Fortune-tellers" in Chesterfield are subject to quite a bit of burdensome regulation. They must pay a \$300 tax to get a business license. Most businesses that make less than \$10,000 a year do not have to pay a business license tax, and nightclubs and adult businesses only pay \$100. Also, to get a business license a "fortune-teller" must submit a list of five references from the county to the Chief of Police for approval. They are also restricted to a single zoning designation which is also reserved for adult businesses, scrap yards and pawn shops. Even then, they must get a conditional use permit.

King seeks the court to declare the county's regulations unconstitutional, in addition to compensatory damages.

You can read the full case filing below:

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Case 3:09-cv-00804-REP Document 1 Filed 12/18/2009 Page 1 of 25

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA
RICHMOND DIVISION**

FILED
DEC 18 2009
CLERK, U.S. DISTRICT COURT
RICHMOND, VA

PATRICIA MOORE-KING,)
Plaintiff)
v.)
CIVIL ACTION NO.: 3:09cv804(REP)
COMPLAINT FOR INJUNCTIVE,
DECLARATORY AND MONETARY
RELIEF
JURY TRIAL DEMANDED
COUNTY OF CHESTERFIELD, VIRGINIA,)
SERVE: Steven L. Micas, Esq.)
Chesterfield County Attorney)
Lane B. Ramsey Admin Building)
9901 Lori Road)
5th Floor, Room 503)
Chesterfield, VA 23832)
and)
JAMES J. L. STEGMAIER, County)
Administrator, County of Chesterfield,)
Virginia,)
SERVE: Lane B. Ramsey Admin Building)
9901 Lori Road)

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One Response to "Chesterfield's war on fortune-tellers"

Adam on December 22nd, 2009 10:11 am



Yet another attack on freedom by people who feel that they know better than othes. She has a clear first ammedment right to say whatever, and other adults can forfeit their hard earned money to her if they should choose. This is a clear case of infringement. What country does the County of Chesterfield think we live in, North Korea where dissent from the norm is not allowed?

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