



Farm-to-Consumer Legal Defense Fund[®]

Legal Representation ♦ Political Action ♦ Education

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FTCLDF Joins Buckeye Institute as Co-Counsel in Civil Suit Over Manna Storehouse Raid

Falls Church, Virginia (Dec. 17, 2008) The Farm-to-Consumer Legal Defense Fund (FTCLDF) today joined the Buckeye Institute's 1851 Center for Constitutional Law in filing a civil lawsuit against the Ohio Department of Agriculture and the Lorrain County Health Department for an illegal raid on the residence of the Stowers family in La Grange, Ohio.

The complaint claims that the Stowers' due process, equal protection and other constitutional rights were violated when their house was raided by representatives from various state and local governmental agencies, including the Ohio Department of Agriculture.

The Stowers, who operate a private cooperative known as Manna Storehouse, were the target of a raid of their personal residence by sheriff deputies and Department of Agriculture personnel, several of whom had guns drawn and who treated the Stowers family like drug dealers. According to the report of the sheriff's department, one of the deputies even snatched a cell phone out of the hand of a teenage son who was attempting to call Mr. Stowers at the time. In addition, the complaint alleges the governmental authorities confiscated all of the Stowers' personal food intended to provide for and nourish them all through the winter months.

"We joined in this suit because it furthers the mission of the Fund, which is to protect and defend the rights of farmers and consumers to have direct commerce with each other free from governmental interference and harassment," said Interim FTCLDF President Pete Kennedy.

Kennedy said "We hope that the Lorrain County Court of Common Pleas recognizes that government is overreaching in this case and is basically engaged in intimidation tactics to frighten people into believing that they cannot provide food for themselves." FTCLDF General Counsel Gary Cox said "this is an example where, once again, the government is trying to deny people their inalienable, fundamental right to produce and consume the foods of their choice. The purpose of our complaint is to correct that wrong."

The complaint also seeks a preliminary injunction against the Department of Agriculture and declarations stipulating that Manna Storehouse and the Stowers are not a “retail food establishment” under Ohio’s Food Safety Code. As a private cooperative, Manna Storehouse is exempted from the Food Safety Code. The Defendants in the case are required to file an answer and respond to the allegations in the complaint.

About The Farm-to-Consumer Legal Defense Fund: The Fund defends the rights and broadens the freedoms of sustainable farmers, and protects consumer access to local, nutrient-dense foods. Concerned citizens can support the Fund by joining at www.farmtoconsumer.org or by contacting the Fund at 703-208-FARM (3276).

The Fund’s sister organization, the Farm-to-Consumer Foundation (www.farmtoconsumerfoundation.org), works to support farmers engaged in sustainable farm stewardship and promote consumer access to local, nutrient-dense food.

Editor’s Note: A copy of the suit filed against the USDA and MDA, together with the amended complaint is available at www.ftclfd.org.

Contacts:

Taaron G. Meikle
Farm-to-Consumer Legal Defense Fund
703-537-8372
tgmeikle@aol.com