

ORIGINAL

No. **25-1245**

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SUPREME COURT, U.S.

In the
Supreme Court of the United States

RONALD J. DITTMER AND IRENE DITTMER,
Petitioners,

v.

KATIE C. DITTMER,
Respondent.

On Petition for a Writ of Certiorari to the
Appellate Court of Illinois, First District

PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI

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April 28, 2026

SUPREME COURT PRESS

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BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether orders of protection entered against the petitioners, impermissibly burden their fundamental rights as defined in the US Constitution, by restricting their free exercise of religion, their freedom of religious expression, their freedom of speech, their right to keep and bear arms, their right to due process, and their right to equal protection under the law.

2. Whether the Illinois Appellate Court erred in rejecting the petitioner's argument for their constitutional rights in their appeal because of their counsel's plain error in failing to address their rights in court. Their appeal drew strong attention to ineffective assistance of counsel.

3. Whether the 750 ILCS 60, the Illinois Domestic Violence Act as currently written, risks a fundamental deprivation of constitutional rights of freedom of speech, freedom of religion, the right to keep and bear arms, the right to due process, and the right to equal protection under the law, for respondents.

4. Whether the Illinois Appellate Court violated the petitioner's rights by ignoring documented evidence of procedural irregularities and judicial mistakes pertaining to their case, and the Illinois Supreme Court in denying a review despite the provided evidence that supported their claims.

PARTIES TO THE PROCEEDINGS

Petitioners and Appellants below

- Ronald J. Dittmer
- Irene Dittmer

Petitioners are a married couple. Hereinafter they are referred to as Ron & Irene or Petitioners interchangeably. They were Respondents to a petition for a protective order.

Respondent and Appellee below

- Katie C. Dittmer

Hereinafter: *Katie or Respondent* interchangeably. She was Petitioner on a petition for a protective order.

LIST OF PROCEEDINGS

Illinois Supreme Court

No. 132416

Ronald Dittmer and Irene Dittmer, *Petitioners*,
v. Katie C. Dittmer, *Respondent*.

Final Order: January 28, 2026

First Appellate Court, Cook County, Illinois

Nos. 1-24-1269 & 1-24-1274 (Consolidated)

Katie Dittmer, *Petitioner-Appellee*, v. Ronald Dittmer
and Irene Dittmer, *Respondents-Appellants*.

Final Order: September 18, 2025

Third Municipal District, Circuit Court
of Cook County, Illinois

No. 2023 OP 31186

Katie Christine Dittmer, *Petitioner*, v.
Ronald James Dittmer, *Respondent*.

Final Order: May 21, 2024

Third Municipal District, Circuit Court
of Cook County, Illinois

No. 2023 OP 31190

Katie Christine Dittmer, *Petitioner*, v.
Irene Dittmer, *Respondent*.

Final Order: May 21, 2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
QUESTIONS PRESENTED	i
PARTIES TO THE PROCEEDINGS	ii
LIST OF PROCEEDINGS	iii
TABLE OF AUTHORITIES	ix
JURISDICTION.....	1
CONSTITUTIONAL AND STATUTORY PROVISION INVOLVED	2
STATEMENT OF THE CASE.....	4
A. Factual Background.....	4
B. Irene’s Quiet Solitude Prayer-Walk	5
C. Ron Responds to What Had Happened	6
D. Katie Takes Legal Action Two-Weeks Later	7
E. Ron and Irene Are Served Emergency Orders of Protection	7
F. Legal Milestones Between Emergency Orders of Protection and Hearing.....	7
G. The Hearing and Decision, May 21, 2024	8
H. Pursuit of an Appeal	11
I. Improper Alterations and Procedures by the Illinois Courts	12
J. Constitutional Concern of 750 ILCS 60/ Illinois Domestic Violence Act.....	13
REASONS FOR GRANTING THE PETITION.....	14
CONCLUSION.....	16

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Cont.)

Page

APPENDIX TABLE OF CONTENTS**OPINIONS AND ORDERS**

Order Denying Leave to Appeal, Illinois Supreme Court (January 28, 2026).....	1a
Order Affirming Circuit Court Ruling, Appellate Court of Illinois First District (September 18, 2025).....	3a
Order Regarding Exhibits, Circuit Court of Cook County (April 3, 2025).....	22a
Every Exhibit Called, Hearing on May 21, 2024	24a
Order, Appellate Court of Illinois, First District (March 5, 2025).....	25a
Bench Ruling Denying Separate hearings for Ron & Irene For Judicial Economy, Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois (May 21, 2024)	27a
Protection Order — Ronald Dittmer, Illinois Circuit Court Cook County (May 21, 2024)	31a
Protection Order — Irene Dittmer, Illinois Circuit Court Cook County (May 21, 2024).....	46a

STATUTORY PROVISION

Related Statutory Provision	51a
750 ILCS 60/103	
Illinois Domestic Violence Act	51a

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Cont.)

	Page
OTHER DOCUMENTS	
Irene's Prayer Walk Route	57a
Privacy Fence Which Blocks Sight Line	58a
View of Bus Stop Area, Nearly 100 Feet Away from Bus Stop	59a
Katie Takes Picture of Irene Coming Around into View At 90 to 100 Feet 2 of 2	60a
Good Faith Separation Agreement Between Katie Dittmer and Ronald Dittmer (February 6, 2024)	61a
Good Faith Separation Agreement Between Katie Dittmer and Irene Dittmer (February 6, 2024)	63a
Email from Tim Requesting Email Communication to Include Katie (February 13, 2021)	65a
Email from Ron Agreeing to Include Katie in Emails (February 13, 2021)	66a
Message from Tim asking Only Irene to Cease Communication, with No Mention of Ron (August 31, 2022)	68a
Email from Katie Reminding Irene Not to Communicate and That Gifts Will Be Returned (November 10, 2022)	69a
Email (Lengthy) From Ron, Trying to Resolve The Family Conflict (April 24, 2021)	70a
Text Message from Irene with Biblical Reference to Tim (January 14, 2022)	82a

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Cont.)

	Page
Ron & Irene Send a Small Package to Their Granddaughters (October 20, 2022)	83a
Ron & Irene Send a Christmas Card to Tim's Family (December 19, 2022)	85a
Email from Ron Regarding Katie's 9-1-1 Call (November 30, 2023)	88a
Change In Court Transcript Receipt of Ron's Original Purchase (May 22, 2024)	91a
Email Exchange Between Ron & Court Reporter Regarding Balance Due on Transcript (May 23, 2024)	92a
Email from Court Reporter Informing Ron That the Transcript Has Been Altered by the Judge (June 12, 2024)	94a
Original Transcript (May 23, 2024)	95a
Modified Transcript (June 12, 2024)	96a
Email from John (Son of Ron & Irene) Concurring with the Text of the original Transcript (June 15, 2024)	98a
Circuit Court Email Stating The Report Will Be Transferred to Appellate Court by End of Day (April 17, 2025)	100a
Email from Ron Requesting Expedited forwarding of the Supplemental Record (March 6, 2025)	102a

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Cont.)

	Page
Affidavit of Defense Witness Stating She Was present for Zoom Hearing But Not Admitted to Testify (May 24, 2025).....	106a
Email from Second Defense Witness Stating She Was Not Admitted to Testify on Zoom (May 5, 2025)	108a

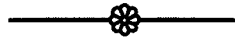
TABLE OF AUTHORITIES

	Page
CASES	
<i>Kennedy v. Bremerton School District</i> , Case No. 21-418, 597 U.S. 507 (2022)	2
 CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS	
U.S. Const. amend. I.....	1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14
U.S. Const. amend. II	1, 2, 7, 11, 13, 14, 15
U.S. Const. amend. V.....	1, 2, 7, 13, 14
U.S. Const. amend. XIV, § 1.....	1, 3, 7, 13, 14
 STATUTES	
28 U.S.C. § 1257(a)	1
750 ILCS 60, IL Domestic Violence Act.....	i, 2, 3, 7, 13-15
 JUDICIAL RULES	
IL Sup. Ct. R. 343	12



OPINIONS BELOW

The consolidated order of the Appellate Court of Illinois First District, dated September 18, 2025 is included at App.3a. This Protective Orders imposed by the Cook County Circuit Court on Petitioners, dated May 21, 2024, are included at App.31a, 46a.



JURISDICTION

The Illinois Supreme Court declined leave to appeal on January 28, 2026. (App.1a). This Court's jurisdiction is invoked under 28 U.S.C. § 1257(a), because the final judgement of the highest state court implicates multiple federal constitutional rights, including those guaranteed by the First, Second, Fifth, and Fourteenth Amendments. This case presents a substantial federal question as to the violation of these rights, and thus, the United States Supreme Court has the authority to review.



CONSTITUTIONAL AND STATUTORY PROVISIONS INVOLVED

This case presents an issue of first impression for this Court to determine if the 750 ILCS 60/ Illinois Domestic Violence Act may unconstitutionally restrict a religious prayer walk on public property, religious expression, freedom of speech, the right to keep and bear arms, the right to due process, and the right to equal protection under the law.

A. Constitutional Provisions

U.S. Const. amend. I¹

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

U.S. Const. amend. II

A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.

U.S. Const. amend. V

No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a

¹ See *Kennedy v. Bremerton School District*, Case No. 21-418, 597 U.S. 507 (2022) where Petitioner Joseph Kennedy lost his job as a high school football coach in the Bremerton School District after he knelt at midfield after games to offer a quiet personal

presentment or indictment of a Grand Jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the Militia, when in actual service in time of War or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offence to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.

U.S. Const. amend. XIV, § 1

All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

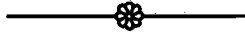
B. Statutory Provision

750 ILCS 60/103

Illinois Domestic Violence Act

Reproduced at App.51a

prayer. Mr. Kennedy sued in federal court, alleging that the district's actions violated the First Amendment's Free Speech and Free Exercise Clauses. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of Mr. Kennedy.



STATEMENT OF THE CASE

A. Factual Background

Ron & Irene are responsible law-abiding citizens, seniors in their middle sixties. The record reflects who Ron and Irene are. There was no testimony given to support that they are substance-abusers, and every exhibit demonstrates, they are not users of foul or abusive language. They are Evangelical Christians who follow God's command to love Him and to love others. As revealed in their testimonies, Ron & Irene live out their faith which includes commitment to family, as well as service and involvement in their community and church. Ron testified of his long-standing service in the Willow Creek Community Church CARS Ministry for twenty-nine years as a volunteer mechanic and team leader, charitably performing auto repairs for under-resourced people.

Katie testified that she always had a strained relationship with Ron & Irene, yet they indicated that they loved Katie where she was at. Ron & Irene valued the family, helping when needed. With the stress of COVID in 2020-2021, as well as the nation's cultural and political divisions, Ron and Irene fell victim to cancel culture which tore many families apart. This prompted Ron & Irene to encourage conflict resolution with Katie & Tim, which ultimately failed. On August 31, 2022, Tim asked solely Irene to cease all communication, which had been a few rare texts to Tim alone. Ron was excluded, and was still able to communicate only by email, which he rarely did. After Irene responded to Tim's request, she immediately stopped all commu-

nication with two exceptions because they were from Ron & Irene together, sent as olive branches. One was a small package in October 2022 for their grandchildren, and one was a loving Christmas card in December 2022 for Tim and his family.

After three years, in light of Ron & Irene's hopeless situation with Katie & Tim and the loss of their grandchildren, some dear Christian friends encouraged Irene to do a prayer-walk to seek God's help for her family's restoration, giving it all over to God. The once-and-done prayer-walk was to pray seven times around the focus of prayer, seven being God's number of completion for Irene's closure.

Irene's prayer-walk was the catalyst in Katie filing emergency orders of protection on both Ron & Irene.

B. Irene's Quiet Solitude Prayer-Walk

On November 29, 2023, Irene decided to perform her quiet solitude prayer-walk because the weather was cooperative. (App.57a). At this point in time, there were never any kind of legal restraint, nor any anticipation of legal action. Irene was determined to be respectful and non-intrusive, parking her car outside the neighborhood to avoid any potential for concern, and carrying only her keys and cell phone. While walking and quietly praying around the block, always walking exclusively on public property, and when on Katie & Tim's street, Irene walked on the other side to be as respectful as possible.

While completing her second round, around the block, Irene heard someone aggressively catching up with her on the other side of the street. She looked across to see Katie staring at her with her five-year-old daughter at her side. With no exchange of words, Irene

immediately returned to her quiet solitude prayer-walk.

During Irene's fourth round in her prayer walk, on the other side of Katie's block, Irene approached a curve in the sidewalk where a tall obstructing privacy fence blocked her view ahead. (App.58a). As she came around the curve, from ninety to one hundred feet away, she unintentionally saw Katie with her five-year-old, receiving her nine-year-old daughter off a school bus. (App.59a, 60a). Irene further reduced her already slow pace to allow Katie and her children to leave and get even farther ahead of her so that she could continue her quiet solitude prayer walk. At no time did Irene make any attempt to draw attention to herself or otherwise communicate with Katie or her children.

When nearly completing her fifth round, Irene was interrupted by a police officer because Katie had called 9-1-1. Irene explained her presence performing a quiet solitude prayer-walk exclusively on public property, but the officer intimidated Irene to leave, so she left. Irene's First Amendment rights were violated for no just cause.

C. Ron Responds to What Had Happened

Ron was troubled that Irene came home emotionally distressed because Katie called the police on her, and also because the officer intimidated her, preventing her from finishing her prayer walk that was meant for good, not for harm.

Early the following morning, on November 30, 2023, Ron sent an email to Katie and Tim, reprimanding Katie for calling the police on Irene, her mother-in-law, and admonishing Tim, their son, for not apologizing

to his mother, because by then, Katie & Tim learned from Tim's brother, John, that Irene had been performing a prayer walk. (App.88a).

D. Katie Takes Legal Action Two-Weeks Later

On December 12, 2023, Katie by herself, is in court for an *ex-parte* hearing, pursuing emergency orders of protection on Ron & Irene. Katie included a few confidential, civil texts exchanged between Irene and Tim during the prior fifteen to twenty-four months, and a few civil emails that Ron had sent to both Tim & Katie during the prior two and a half years. The court granted Katie her request for emergency orders of protection against Ron & Irene, under the Illinois Domestic Violence Act, based on harassment.

E. Ron and Irene Are Served Emergency Orders of Protection

Three days later, on December 15, 2023, a Kane County, IL sheriff served Ron & Irene each an emergency order of protection at their house. This caused an immediate loss of their Second, Fifth, and Fourteenth amendment rights to keep and bear arms without their right to due process, that required them to surrender their firearms within forty-eight hours of which they complied.

F. Legal Milestones Between Emergency Orders of Protection and Hearing

Ron & Irene had drawn up what they called a "Good Faith Separation Agreement" that included everything a two-year order of protection would include, with exception to the surrendering of firearms. It would be honored simply on "Good Faith." Katie initially agreed to it (App.61a, 63a), but in court, Katie insisted

that the court oversee it which did not remove the family matter from the court system as Ron & Irene had hoped, so the offer was withdrawn.

The date for the hearing was then set but Ron & Irene's attorney dismissed himself soon thereafter so they hired another attorney. At the next court appearance, the parties attempted to reach a settlement. Ron & Irene consented, but Katie rejected.

G. The Hearing and Decision, May 21, 2024

The court heavily scrutinized the limited communication between Ron & Irene and their forty-year-old son, Tim, even though Tim was not present in court to provide his perspective on all the communication in question. Ron & Irene's ability to speak freely (First amendment rights) and resolve family disputes was on trial.

Tim & Katie ceased verbal communication during 2021, requiring only email, and to include Katie in every email (App.65a) of which Ron always complied (App.66a), noting that Irene communicated only with Tim, and only texting. Irene never communicated with Katie. Ron & Irene question how a rare few confidential texts to Tim were considered as harassment to Katie.

In August of 2022, Tim (App.68a), and later in November, Katie (App.69a), asked Irene, (never Ron) to cease communicating of which she complied with exception to a small mailed package and a loving Christmas card, both sent as olive branches that Ron & Irene jointly sent together. Though Tim & Katie's request did not include Ron, the court held him to the same standard.

Ron sent a detailed email one and a half years before his emergency order of protection, an attempt at conflict resolution. (App.70a). The court used Ron's email to characterize him as a risk of future harm to Katie & Tim. Ron's First amendment right to exercise his freedom of speech for conflict resolution, was used against him.

When questioning Irene concerning a text to Tim, the court allowed the biblical story of Abraham and Isaac to be misquoted and misinterpreted according to the bible, to portray Irene as a risk of future harm, when Irene clearly stated that it was a time of testing for both Tim and her, to do right according to their Christian faith. (App.82a). The court held Irene's First amendment rights, to freedom of speech and religious expression, against her.

In October of 2022, Ron & Irene mailed a small package, an olive branch to Katie & Tim's two young children to demonstrate that Ron & Irene care about Tim and his family. (App.83a). The court used this small loving gesture to characterize Ron & Irene as a risk of future harm to Katie and her family.

Ron & Irene's loving Christmas card, an olive branch mailed to Tim and his family one year before being served emergency orders of protection, was subjected to intense scrutiny. (App.85a). The belabored subject became a centerpiece with the words "Christmas card" or referenced "card" stated forty-three times in the court transcript. The court improperly relied on an innocuous Christmas card to support its decision to characterize Ron & Irene as a risk of future harm, denying their First amendment rights to freedom of religious expression.

After Irene's interrupted prayer walk, Ron sent a reprimanding email the next morning to Katie and Tim for calling 9-1-1 on Irene. (App.88a). The court used Ron's First amendment rights to freedom of speech to categorize him as a risk of future harm.

Although Katie testified that Irene could have been on a prayer walk, and the corroborating testimonies of Irene, Ron, John, and Helen confirmed Irene's prayer walk, the court made a mistake, stating that Irene was walking around to see her granddaughters when it was clearly stated in the testimonies of Irene, Ron, John, and Helen, that Irene was doing a prayer walk, not there to see the children.

Katie testified that Ron & Irene's limited communication frustrated her. However, frustration is not harassment. Nevertheless, the *ex-parte* court granted Katie emergency orders of protection on a harassment claim, which then triggered the pursuit of permanent orders of protection. The presiding judge over the hearing, compounded the error when ignoring the critical distinction between frustration and harassment.

No evidence was submitted to the court that would support a finding of harm, risk of harm, threat, proximity threat, or any form of harassment from Ron & Irene. The natural, civil effort to address issues and resolve them, were characterized as threats and harassment. The court gave undo weight to Katie's subjective feelings, rather than to the objective evidence, dismissing the testimonies of Ron & Irene as unpersuasive, and disregarding the supporting testimonies of Ron & Irene's son, John, who included in his testimony that he has never known Irene to harm anyone, and fellow parishioner, Helen, who counselled Irene's prayer walk.

In summary, the court sharply criticized Ron & Irene's limited communication with their son, Tim, disregarding their religious convictions, family values, and their efforts at conflict resolution. The court improperly infringed on their First amendment rights to freedom of religion and religious expression, as well as their freedom of speech. The court found by a preponderance of the evidence that Ron & Irene posed a risk of future harm, and accordingly entered the maximum two-year orders of protection to run consecutively to the prior five-month emergency orders of protection, which resulted in Ron & Irene's loss of their Second amendment rights to keep and bear arms without proof given to necessitate it.

H. Pursuit of an Appeal

Ron & Irene appealed their combined case(s) to the First Appellate Court of Cook County, IL. which included ineffective assistance of counsel. Nevertheless, the Appellate Court argued that Ron & Irene did not raise constitutional issues in the merits hearing, hence the Appellate Court forfeited their constitutional rights. Ron & Irene's attorney, making many plain errors, was not given serious consideration with regard to failing to argue Ron & Irene's constitutional rights. The appellate court simply adopted the circuit court's findings without a thorough independent analysis, ignoring the evidence supplied in Ron & Irene's reply brief and in their response to sanctions.

Ron & Irene then pursued an appeal to the Illinois Supreme Court, but were denied a review.

I. Improper Alterations and Procedures by the Illinois Courts

1) The presiding judge changed the original court transcript in Katie's favor. (App.91a-98a).

2) Over Ron & Irene's objection, the judge ordered a joint hearing that improperly conflated the proceedings and prejudiced them in Katie's favor. (App.27a).

3) Every exhibit submitted to the court during the hearing, was not entered into Ron & Irene's court records. In support of their appeal, Ron & Irene made many attempts over many months to restore every exhibit, but failed to achieve it. Critical exhibits proving Irene's quiet solitude prayer-walk, were never re-entered. (App.22a, 24a, 102a). It also took many months for the circuit and appellate court clerks' offices to include the court transcripts and Ron's entire case file into the supplemental record, accounting for the reason for the exceptional time between the hearing and the appeal.

4) Illinois Supreme Court Rule 343 provides 35 days to prepare a brief after the record becomes available, but Ron & Irene were given only 36 hours after being notified that the record was certified by the appellate court. The briefing schedule was never set as ordered, after the full record became available. (App.25a). Instead, the appellate court used the date that the full record had to be submitted by, as the deadline for the brief. Ron's plea to the Circuit and Appellate Courts' offices (App.100a, 102a) was a reflection of the many months it took to assemble the supplemental record, and the certification of the record by the appellate court.

Ron & Irene, given only 36 hours, was surely not enough time to prepare a thorough brief after the record became available.

5) Two critical defense witnesses were waiting on Zoom during the hearing because they were pre-approved to testify on Zoom, but the judge never turned on Zoom, and Ron & Irene's ineffective assistance of counsel, never asked for Zoom to be turned on to acknowledge them, therefore they were not called to testify in Irene's defense. (App.106a, 108a).

6) Katie was a third party, empowered by the IL courts to legally forbid communication (be it very rare) between Ron & Irene and their forty-year old son Tim.

J. Constitutional Concern of 750 ILCS 60/ Illinois Domestic Violence Act

The Illinois Domestic Violence Act, (IDVA) as currently written is inherently vague, broadly phrased that it can be wielded as a tool for unjust, judicially motivated outcomes, thereby risking a fundamental deprivation of First, Second, Fifth, and Fourteenth amendment rights of freedom of speech, freedom of religion, the right to keep and bear arms, the right to due process, and equal protection of the law, for respondents.

In this case, in Katie's *ex-parte* hearing which IDVA allows for, she stated that she felt harassed and threatened. The court granted her emergency order of protections founded upon vague IDVA rules concerning harassment in 750 ILCS 60/103 (7) and (9) that are not defined with consideration to Ron & Irene's rights as guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution. The court's application of its discretion was an overreach,

exceeding the boundaries set by law that infringed on Ron & Irene's constitutional rights.

In the full hearing, the presiding judge's capricious use of the IDVA was so expansive that it fundamentally altered the intended scope of the statute. The court overextended itself, declaring that Ron & Irene exhibited risk-related behavior supported through overbroadly defined IDVA rules.



REASONS FOR GRANTING THE PETITION

This case presents an important and recurring constitutional issue that has never been addressed by this Court. The Illinois Domestic Violence Act was applied in a manner that restricts Ron & Irene's fundamental rights under the First, Second, Fifth, and Fourteenth Amendments without factual evidence of abuse, harm, threat, harassment, criminal behavior, or criminal conviction.

The orders of protection prohibited Ron & Irene from exercising their Christian faith and family values, including a religious prayer walk, while also stripping them of their Second Amendment right to keep and bear arms. The lower courts compounded these violations through improper alterations and procedures.

Ron & Irene's counsel for the hearing, provided ineffective assistance when making a plain error in failing to raise Ron & Irene's First, Second, Fifth, and Fourteenth Amendment rights. The Illinois Appellate Court rejected Ron & Irene's claim of ineffective-

assistance of counsel, as well as ignoring the judge's mistakes and improper procedures in the handling of this case. The Illinois Supreme Court denied a review of this case.

Ron & Irene have exhausted all available state remedies. This case is one of first impression concerning the constitutionality of the Illinois Domestic Violence Act when used to restrict the freedoms protected under the U.S. Constitution.

The orders of protection upon Ron & Irene have resulted in their defamation of character that greatly interferes with their ability to freely serve their church and community because they are now considered a liability. When volunteering, the question is asked if there is a history of an order of protection. When answering "yes", the volunteer is most often rejected, especially when children are involved.

Because of this injustice, Ron and Irene have suffered severe reputational harm and face ongoing social stigma and judgement.

Ron & Irene are concerned that Katie may present a reason that is not credible, to support a continuance beyond the original two-year orders of protection, repeating every two years. Ron & Irene's loss of their Second Amendment rights could be life-long.



CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, this Court should grant Ronald J. Dittmer and Irene Dittmer this petition for review.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Ronald J. Dittmer

/s/ Irene Dittmer

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