

PRESS RELEASE

Vanderbilt Law First Amendment Clinic Files Lawsuit Challenging State Representative Jeremy Faison for Viewpoint Discrimination on Facebook

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NASHVILLE, TN--Vanderbilt Law School's Stanton Foundation First Amendment Clinic filed suit in federal court against Representative Jeremy Faison for deleting comments and blocking Dean Fox on Facebook.

The lawsuit was filed on behalf of Dean Fox, adjunct professor at Middle Tennessee State University and freelance sports journalist. In September 2021, Mr. Fox was blocked from viewing or engaging with Representative Faison's official Facebook page immediately after posting a critical comment.

The lawsuit asserts that Representative Faison's actions violate Mr. Fox's civil rights secured by the United States and Tennessee Constitutions. Representative Faison uses his official Facebook page as a member of the Tennessee State Legislature to announce bills, receive legislative input, and assist constituents. In his official capacity, Representative Faison must allow individuals, like Mr. Fox, to access and engage with his public platform.

Mr. Fox was blocked from Representative Faison's official Facebook page for posting a critical comment regarding Faison's Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan. By deleting Mr. Fox's comment and blocking Mr. Fox from viewing the Facebook page, Representative Faison's actions run counter to court decisions throughout the country; many courts have barred state officials from blocking constituents that express dissenting viewpoints. Mr. Fox's lawsuit seeks to restore access to Representative Faison's page so that Mr. Fox can once again engage with the public official and other users on the Facebook page.

For Mr. Fox, the importance of this case goes beyond his own experience and implicates the First Amendment rights of all Tennesseans, regardless of viewpoint. "For me, the bottom line is this: if the people are cut off from their elected officials, the people can't demand accountability. Without accountability, our democracy can't function the way the Founders intended," Mr. Fox explains.

"This case demonstrates how protecting First Amendment freedoms is critical to sustaining democratic discourse," said Catherine Galateria, a student attorney with the First Amendment Clinic.

"We hope this case will serve as an accountability tool so that individuals may have meaningful access and engagement with their representatives," Samantha Hunt, another student attorney with the Clinic, explained.

The full complaint can be found [here](#).

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Vanderbilt Law School's Stanton Foundation First Amendment Clinic is a nonprofit, nonpartisan legal clinic that focuses on the speech, press, and assembly rights of individuals and organizations.

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