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NEWS RELEASE

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Defending Scouts' Honor: Law Center Files Brief With Supreme Court in Support of Boy Scouts

ANN ARBOR, MI — Arguing that the State of Connecticut is unconstitutionally discriminating against the Boy Scouts by excluding it from a state charitable program because the Scouts exclude avowed homosexuals, the Thomas More Law Center, a national public interest law firm based in Ann Arbor, Michigan has filed a brief supporting the Boy Scouts of America, urging the Supreme Court to take up the case.

Connecticut's decision to exclude the Boy Scouts was upheld by the Second Circuit Court of Appeals, despite a recent opinion by the U.S. Supreme Court holding that the Scouts had a First Amendment right of expressive association to exclude homosexuals from its membership.

Law Center Associate Counsel Robert Muise explained, "It is unconstitutional to force an organization to forego its basic values, beliefs and practices as a condition for the receipt of a government benefit. This decision, which permits the government to punish an organization based on its opposition to homosexuality, not only harms the Boy Scouts, but it also threatens the constitutional rights of other individuals and organizations who object to homosexuality on the basis of their religious beliefs."

Connecticut excluded the Boy Scouts from a state charitable campaign, which the Boy Scouts had participated in for over 30 years. The state program allows private groups such as the Boy Scouts to receive charitable donations through voluntary payroll deductions from State employees. State officials denied the Boy Scouts access to this government program because they claimed that the Scouts were violating state non-discrimination laws by excluding avowed homosexuals from positions of leadership. State officials do permit, however, homosexual activist organizations such as the Lambda Legal Defense Fund to participate in the campaign.

Richard Thompson, President and Chief Counsel of the Thomas More Law Center, criticized Connecticut's attack on the Scouts, "Connecticut is pandering to the homosexual agenda by punishing the Scouts for exercising their constitutional rights. Permitting this decision to stand would in effect allow governments to legally extort organizations and individuals to give up basic beliefs."

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The Law Center's brief argues that the State of Connecticut's exclusion of the Scouts indirectly attacks its First Amendment rights by forcing the Scouts to forfeit its constitutionally protected beliefs and practices in order to qualify for the State program.

The Second Circuit's decision, if allowed to stand, has potential negative consequences for many faith-based organizations. As the Law Center pointed out in its brief, "The Second Circuit's opinion threatens not only the First Amendment right to expressive association, but also the First Amendment right to free exercise of religion. This opinion adversely affects the First Amendment rights of the Boy Scouts, and it has far reaching implications that could threaten the constitutional rights of religious-based organizations that seek to promote and preserve their organizational values, particularly with regard to the issue of homosexuality."

The Thomas More Law Center defends and promotes religious freedom, time-honored family values, and the sanctity of human life through education, litigation, and related activities. It does not charge for its services. It depends on contributions from individuals, corporations and Foundations. It is recognized by the IRS as a section 501(c)(3) organization. You may reach the Thomas More Law Center at (734) 827-2001 or visit our website at www.thomasmore.org.

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