

Oral statement to the Subcommittee on the Constitution and Limited Government by Paul Vaughn December 18, 2024

Chairman Roy, Ranking Member Scanlon, and honorable members of this committee, thank you for entertaining this important discussion today and for allowing me to share our story with you.

I want to speak to you today about Project 2022. This is the DOJ's project on arresting Pro-life Christians. On October 5th, of 2022, a little after 7:00 in the morning, my house was assaulted, my wife and children were terrorized, and I was kidnapped at gun point by four armed men. I had just sent three of my children to the car so I could take them to school when the house began to shake from a loud banging near the front door. I heard men shouting on my porch, "Open up, FBI". The banging continued. As I looked out of a side window to check on the location of my children, I saw two unmarked SUVs with lights flashing, but I did not see my children. The banging continued and I heard more shouting, "Open up, FBI!". I opened the curtains on the front door to find three men with guns trained on the door. I asked who they were looking for and they replied, "We're here for you". They did not identify me by name or provide any identification for themselves.

As I believed there was an imminent threat to the safety of my wife and 7 children I determined to surrender myself to them hoping they were legitimate law enforcement.

I opened the door and stepped out onto the porch staring down the barrels of both a pistol and an automatic weapon pointed at my head. As I did, I asked what authority they were operating under and if they had identification. I later learned that at the same time, three of my children ages 12, 14, and 18 were being detained in the side yard on the edge of the woods by a 4th

armed man.

I was taken without the presentation of a warrant or identification when requested.

Make no mistake, this was an armed conflict, and I was unarmed. Lethal force was abused to abridge my God given and constitutionally secured rights. At the moment of being placed in handcuffs, I became a slave to ideological tyrants, either the ones holding the weapons or the ones they obeyed.

The event that brought this ill-fated drama to my front door took place 18 months prior. On March 5th of 2021 pro-life Christians gathered at the Carafem Abortion Clinic in Mount Juliet Tennessee to attempt to save unborn children who were scheduled to die that morning.

Of the 150-200 people who attended that day, 8 adults were arrested for non violently sitting at the abortion clinic doors and refusing to leave. For doing a sit in like many of you have seen right here in you own buildings. I wonder in any of those BLM, Antifa, and Hamas protestors ever faced a decade in prison?

But the fact remains I personally did not do any of these things. I did nothing that was outside of constitutionally protected free speech and religious freedom. **I did nothing different that day, that I have not done since the FACE Act was passed in 1994.** I did not do a sit in. I broke no laws, federal or local. I was not arrested the day of the event. In fact, we were due with our 11th child, and I promised my wife I would be extra careful.

I talked with the police chief and the lead negotiating team. I helped the police and the pro-lifers that day as a messenger between the two groups. The police spokesperson complimented the peaceful nature of the group in the media that afternoon and the lead negotiator for the Mount Juliet Police Department

testified at our federal trial on our behalf.

There is a lot of talk about violence around this issue of abortion. Of course all people of honor and character denounce acts of violence on either side of this issue. But the narrative has been projected against the prolife people and fails to take into account at least 3 other aspects of violence around this issue. 1) There is violence committed against an unborn child in every abortion. 2) There is violence committed by aggrieved fathers or other family members of the aborted child. 3) There is violence being done to pro-lifers by our own government.

Any serious conversation about violence going forward needs to include these three facts. The FACE Act was ostensibly passed because of violence, but as my family knows very well, all it did was give violence the cover of law and place it in the hands of the government.

The phrase, the “process is the punishment” and “The Weaponization of FACE Act” are not just words in our household. We are are living the reality of those words.

Since my arrest, I have been restricted to the middle district of Tennessee for over 2 years under the control and supervision of federal monitoring. My family spent 20 months of having a potential decade in prison hanging over my head. We endured long stressful days in the actual trial, enduring lies and half-truths for the sake of the government winning a case with no regards for seeking justice. Since the sentencing I have been on house arrest for 6 months, and have another 2.5 years of parole to serve. This process has entailed government agents invading and inspecting our home, calling my home making sure I’m obeying their rules, it involved giving up my rights as a US citizen. In spite of the novel use of the 1800s conspiracy law in conjunction with the FACE Act, the appeals court has denied our motion to stay the sentencing pending the appeal. All of this while trying to maintain a business and some sort of normal life for my children who have

been terrorized by their own government.

All of this – “process is the punishment” and I was one that did not get jail time. There are those who are in jail today while we are discussing this abuse, some of them for over a year. With the overturning of Roe and the long train of abuses and unequal application of the FACE Act, there is no legitimate reason for it to remain on the books. It is a tool whose soul purpose is to stifle the free speech and abuse the rights of Christian conservatives.

There is nothing the FACE Act does, that is not already accomplished by state laws across the land. If abortion is returned to the states, then so should the laws governing it.