

ACLU OF VIRGINIA

P R E S S R E L E A S E

February 3, 2004

ACLU Asks House Committee Not to Ban Nudist Camps for Kids

The ACLU of Virginia has asked the House General Laws Committee to kill a bill that would ban juvenile nudist camps in Virginia. The bill, patroned by Delegate John S. Reid, would require that a parent or legal guardian be present for children attending a nudist camps. The text of a memo delivered earlier today to members of the General Laws Committee follows:

TO: House Committee on General Laws
FROM: Kent Willis, Executive Director, and Aimee Perron, Legislative Director
DATE: February 2, 2004

RE: Opposition to HB 158, Prohibiting Nudist Camps for Juveniles (John S. Reid)

HB 158 prohibits the issuance of a license to any campground, summer camp, or hotel if it operates a nudist camp for juveniles and does not require the presence of a parent or legal guardian of every juvenile in attendance.

Delegate Reid's legislation reacts to the convening of a juvenile nudist camp in Ivor, Virginia, during the summer of 2003. Although Florida has hosted such camps for many years, the juvenile nudist camp held in Ivor is apparently the first in Virginia.

The ACLU understands the state's obligation to protect the health and safety of minors, and does not oppose special regulations and oversight of nudist camps for juveniles at which their legal guardians are not present. However, a ban on such nudist camps goes too far, denying certain juveniles of the opportunity to fully participate in the naturist lifestyle and stripping naturist parents of the fundamental right to direct the upbringing of their children.

One of the most elemental principles of a free society is that laws restricting individual rights will not be put in place without a reason. Certain traditional core rights such as free speech and freedom of religion may not be abridged without the state first demonstrating that such laws and regulations serve a compelling government interest and that they have been designed to use the least burdensome means necessary to accomplish legitimate government objectives.

HB 158 appears to stem from an uninformed, overreaction to the notion of teenagers cavorting with each other while nude. Naturists with whom we have spoken and who intend to submit testimony and literature to the House Committee on General Laws suggest something quite the opposite. The ACLU recommends that legislators make the effort to understand fully the purpose, operations, and history of juvenile nudist camps before considering any action to restrict them.

Contact:

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