



ADVANCING FAITH, FAMILY AND FREEDOM

As representatives of Family Research Council, a non-profit organization of 80 staff members, we are here in support of our friend and colleague, Leo Johnson. The attack on August 15, 2012 at our headquarters, devastating as it was, did not just harm Leo. As the court knows, Mr. Corkins' stated intention was to kill as many FRC staff as possible to send a political message. But for Leo's heroic conduct, and the protective hand of the Lord, this crime might have ended as one of the worst acts of domestic terrorism the District of Columbia has ever seen.

Today we are not seeking vengeance, but we do seek justice. As we continue to pray that Mr. Corkins would find peace, we also ask the Court for the maximum sentence for Mr. Corkins that the law allows.

Many on our staff and in their families have suffered ongoing emotional and psychological harm and have changed their daily lives in response to the attack. Every day, our staff has to deal with the fact that each of us was a potential victim. For those in our DC headquarters, we enter the building, walk past our armed security guards who were added after the shooting, and pass the desk where Leo was shot. We are grateful for Leo's extraordinary actions, but are pained by his injury and pray for his full recovery. Yet every day many on our team are reminded of the attack and relive the trauma. Our family members are reminded every day that they may have lost a family member that day had Leo not intervened. And their worries continue, wondering about further violence. Yet, Mr. Corkins has so far shown no remorse. The facts show he planned his attack in great detail and hoped for massive casualties. He learned how to shoot his new weapon. He rehearsed the trip to the building, faking a reason for entering the lobby two days before the actual attack. As he admits, this crime was pre-meditated and had been on his mind for years before he decided to act on his plan.

Mr. Corkins said "I don't like the organization and what it stands for." On February 6, prosecutors revealed that Mr. Corkins had obtained our building location from the Southern Poverty Law Center's website. He was clearly inspired by the Southern Poverty Law Center's labeling of FRC as a "hate group" based on our belief that marriage can only take place between one man and one woman. The Southern Poverty Law Center's connection in court to this terrorist shooting, however, does not in any way lessen Mr. Corkins' responsibility for his crimes. His goal and that of the SPLC is to silence those with whom they disagree. In a civil society, shutting down debate is not how reasonable people and organizations operate. Intimidating and bullying others shreds the "ordered liberty" of which our Founders wrote and for which they advocated, and places all of us in jeopardy of losing our sacred rights as militant extremists claim the public square exclusively for themselves. For his actions and the threat they imposed both to Family Research Council personnel and the civility of our society itself, Mr. Corkins should be held fully accountable for his actions.

The staff at FRC would never have dreamed that there would come a day when publishing research that says kids flourish best with a Mom and a Dad would subject them to obscene calls, verbal harassment, and now an armed gunman threatening their lives. Or that academic research into homosexuality and public policy would produce violence.

A lenient sentence for Mr. Corkins would send a message that terrorism is, in some way, a legitimate form of political action. That is an idea against which America has resisted for decades, particularly in light of the September 11 attacks. A maximum sentence is the way to show others that there is a consequence for the actions they might be contemplating. And we pray the example would prevent future attacks on any person or organization for any reason, especially for their beliefs. Consequently, that is what we are requesting – the maximum prison time that is allowed for Mr. Corkins' crime.

This request is based on justice and fairness for Mr. Corkins, for the Family Research Council staff and our families, and for every citizen of the Washington, DC metro area.

We want to distinguish between our belief that Mr. Corkins should be held responsible for his action is distinct from the fact that we personally forgive Mr. Corkins. We are thankful he was not injured, and just hours after the shooting while our staff gathered to pray for Leo, we also prayed for Mr. Corkins. We continue to ask the Lord to fill Mr. Corkins' life, and that of his family, with grace, love and mercy. We cannot imagine the trauma his crime has inflicted upon his parents.

Thank you for your consideration.

Tony Perkins, President of the Family Research Council for the staff of Family Research Council