

The Firm, ACLU and ACLU-MS File Federal Lawsuit Over Anti-Muslim Bias in Mississippi

11.03.21



Simpson Thacher, the American Civil Liberties Union and the American Civil Liberties Union of Mississippi filed a federal lawsuit on November 3, 2021, stating that Horn Lake officials unlawfully denied zoning approval for a proposed mosque due to anti-Muslim bias. Filed in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Mississippi, the complaint for *Abraham House of God v. City of Horn Lake* notes that city officials denied approval for the mosque even though it would be located on property zoned for houses of worship, and the mosque's proposed site plan "met or exceeded" all requirements for approval, according to staff employed by the City's Planning Commission. Within hours of filing the lawsuit, the Judge issued an order suggesting the defendants consider entering into settlement discussions or face expeditious scheduling of a hearing.

The lawsuit, brought on behalf of the mosque and the two local leaders who founded it, alleges that the city's actions violated the federal Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act, which provides heightened protections for houses of worship in zoning proceedings, and the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The complaint (available [here](#)) asks the federal district court to issue an injunction allowing construction of the mosque.

The Simpson Thacher team includes Jonathan Youngwood, Janet Gochman, Avia Gridi, Christopher Kraft and Nihara Choudri.

The case has been covered by publications including the [Associated Press](#), [Commercial Appeal](#), [WJTV](#), [DeSoto County News](#), [Local Memphis](#), [Magnolia State Live](#), [DeSoto Times-Tribune](#), [WDAM](#) and [Action News 5](#).

Team and Contacts

Jonathan Youngwood

Partner

jyoungwood@stblaw.com

1-212-455-3539

Avia Gridi

Associate

Janet Gochman

Senior Counsel

jgochman@stblaw.com

+1-212-455-2815

Christopher Kraft

Associate

avia.gridi@stblaw.com
+1-202-636-5560

christopher.kraft@stblaw.com
+1-202-636-5882

