

# Woman Sues to Distribute Bibles on Bus

A Wisconsin woman is suing for the right to hand out Bibles on her county's buses.

Gail Anderson had been offering the Bible to fellow passengers since she began riding the bus in 1999, the Associated Press reported. But Anderson's Bible-passing days ended abruptly last summer when she was kicked off the bus for handing out Bibles.

Milwaukee County bus riders are banned from distributing any form of advertisement or literature, according to transit policy. The county's corporate council, William J. Domina, told AP the policy is rooted in safety.

"This is a mobile vehicle where people are in seats," Domina said. "Having people moving around handing out material is unsafe."

Domina said the situation would have been handled the same way whether it was the Bible or cookbooks, claiming it was not a "content issue."

Anderson filed a federal lawsuit seeking to overturn the transit policy.

"Forcefully removing Ms. Anderson from the bus because she distributed the Bible was a humiliating experience," Anderson's attorney, Matthew D. Staver, said in a statement. "Passengers don't shed their constitutional rights when they enter public transportation venues."

Staver, president of the Liberty Counsel, a Florida-based organization specializing in religious civil-liberty issues, said the problem is that the rules are not enforced uniformly.

The law technically "prevents the giving of a letter to a friend, passing along a

newspaper after a passenger has finished reading it, handing out a business card to a new acquaintance, and, as here, the giving of a free book to a fellow passenger,” Staver told the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*.

“In practice, it’s virtually impossible to enforce,” Staver said. “The drivers sometimes enforce it with a wink and a nod, and sometimes they enforce it rigorously, as they did here.”

A Liberty Counsel press release said the lawsuit claims the Milwaukee County policy is “overbroad and prevents more speech than is necessary to achieve any legitimate governmental objective.”

Besides temporary and permanent relief from the policy, the lawsuit seeks unspecified damages.

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