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PRESS RELEASE
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American Civil Liberties Union of Eastern Missouri Wins Anti-Demonstration Lawsuit

ST. LOUIS — Today the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit ruled in favor of the American Civil Liberties Union of Eastern Missouri's appeal on behalf of Donald E. Stahl. Stahl, a member of an organization called the 9/11 Questions Group, was arrested in 2009 for holding a sign stating "911 was an inside job" on the Park Avenue Overpass in the city of St. Louis, which is located over the merger of Interstates 44 and 55, during morning rush hour traffic.

A St. Louis City police officer was called to the scene because someone had reported that the sign was offensive. Stahl and another demonstrator were told to leave because they were obstructing traffic, although traffic was moving at a safe pace. When Stahl and the other demonstrator refused to leave, they were handcuffed and arrested.

The demonstrators were arrested because of an ordinance that made it illegal to conduct a demonstration in an area where a gathering could impede either pedestrians or vehicular traffic. In addition to ruling in favor of the ACLU-EM, the court ruled that this ordinance is unconstitutional and should not be enforced.

"This anti-demonstrating ordinance has been used for decades to discourage people from protesting in the city of St. Louis," said Brenda L. Jones, executive director of the ACLU-EM. "We are pleased that it has finally been ruled unconstitutional."

Tony Rothert, the ACLU-EM's legal director, explained, "This ordinance violated due process. Demonstrators had no way of knowing their speech was illegal, until it caused a reaction by others, and by then, it was too late."

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