

WWJD motto survives lawsuit

Litigant claimed 'What would Jesus do?' acronym was 'harassing'

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A Minnesota company that was sued for "harassing" people by printing the "WWJD" logo – short for "What would Jesus do?" – on its correspondence is now free from litigation, the charges dismissed with prejudice.



As WND reported, Bullseye Collection Agency of Monticello, Minn., found itself at the center of a legal battle after the president of a competing agency accused Bullseye of violating the federal Debt Collection Practices Act. Mark Neill of the Bureau of Collection Recovery, LLC, had alleged that Bullseye's use of the "WWJD" logo as part of the company's letterhead, and therefore printed on its collection letters, constituted an "abusive and unfair collection practice."

Documents from the lawsuit claimed Bullseye's use of "WWJD" invokes shame or guilt in the letter's recipient, portraying the debtor "as a sinner who is going to hell."

"That claim is beyond ridiculous and absurd," responded Harry Mihet, an attorney for Liberty Counsel, which defended Bullseye in the suit, "because the collection letters do not contain any language even remotely resembling that claim."

Bullseye in turn, with the help of Liberty Counsel, filed a counterclaim, believing that Neill – and his much larger collections agency – may have had an ulterior motive: a large company using an anti-Christian legal case to drown a smaller competitor in legal fees.

Mihet told WND that Bullseye uses "WWJD" on all its correspondence, not just collection letters, as part of its overarching business philosophy.

"The only thing that the letters have is this four-letter acronym in upper right corner of the letterhead," Mihet told WND. "They are otherwise a model in civility and respect, quite different from other letters you will find in this field.

"The reason they put it there is because they want the world to know that they have adopted for themselves a code of conduct that goes above and beyond any federal law requirements to be civil and polite to debtors," Mihet continued. "They treat debtors the

way they would want to be treated and the way Jesus would treat them: with civility, respect and integrity, which is a breath of fresh air in this industry, where people have unfortunately come to expect quite the opposite."

Bullseye's website even creates a play on the acronym based on the owner's name, John Twardy:

"Frequently someone will come into my office and explain a situation on an account and ask me what to do. They will say to each other, 'WWJD - What would John do?'" the company website states. "The answer is always the same. Solve the problem instead of creating a new one."

Mihet told WND that Bullseye employs only a small staff of mothers and grandmothers, some working only part-time. Defending itself from the lawsuit cost the company significant legal fees prior to receiving assistance from Liberty Counsel, so much that it was forced to cut its pay budget.

Bullseye and Liberty Counsel suspected the original lawsuit may have been intended to swamp the little company in legal fees, which prompted them to file the counterclaim for abuse of process and civil conspiracy against Neill and his much larger collection agency.

"Competitor businesses may not use the courts to crush their competition and press their intolerance of Christian viewpoints," Mihet explained in a statement. "The Fair Debt Collection Practices Act forbids only religious slurs and insults, but does not prohibit courteous references to people of historical, philosophical or religious significance. Courts cannot be used to legitimize religious harassment. The big business bully thought it could crush its competition by pouncing on it with a lawsuit. Liberty Counsel will not permit that to happen."

In light of the counterclaim, Neill dismissed with prejudice each of his claims, such that he can never bring them again in any court. As a result, Bullseye remains free to continue using "WWJD" on its stationery.

Mihet, senior litigation counsel for Liberty Counsel, commented in a statement, "Neither the law nor the courtroom provides refuge for those wishing to harm others with their intolerance of Christian viewpoints. Christian men and women in business need not check their faith at the door of the marketplace."

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