

NEWS

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Sexual Abuse Victims File Civil Lawsuits Against Oregon Congregation of the Jehovah's Witnesses and National Organization

Childhood Victims Suffered Sexual Abuse from Congregational Leader

Portland, OR, December 1, 2014 – Irwin M. Zalkin of The Zalkin Law Firm and Portland Attorney Kristian Roggendorf, of the Roggendorf Law Firm filed a sexual abuse civil lawsuit today against the North Hillsboro Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses, located in Hillsboro, Oregon and the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc. The lawsuit was filed on behalf of Velicia Alston and a second unnamed Plaintiff, John Roe, who were both minor children when their families were active in the Congregation at the time of the alleged abuse.

According to the civil complaint, the Plaintiff Velicia Alston was sexually abused as a child by Daniel Castellanos ("Castellanos") who was a Baptized Publisher and Elder or Ministerial Servant in Hillsboro Congregation. The complaint alleges that Castellanos sexually abused and molested the plaintiff on multiple occasions when she was approximately 11 or 12 years old. The civil complaint also includes the allegation that Castellanos sexually abused and molested on multiple occasions a second Plaintiff, John Roe, when he was approximately 8-10 years old.

As a result of Castellanos' sexual abuse, molestation, and breach of trust, the lawsuit alleges that the Plaintiffs suffered and continue to suffer severe and debilitating physical, mental, and emotional injury, including pain and suffering, physical and emotional trauma, and permanent psychological damage distinct from the abuse itself. The lawsuit asks for damages and future costs for counseling, psychiatric and psychological medical treatment.

"We will show that these innocent children had their lives ruined by this Congregational leader and this religious organization, who suppressed its knowledge of a child predator within the Congregation by following the policies imposed by the Governing Body of the Jehovah's Witnesses to keep such information secret at all cost to avoid scandal and public scrutiny," said Zalkin.

The complaints allege that the defendants named in the case, the Hillsboro Congregation, the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., were negligent in their legal duty to protect the minor children in their care and failed in their duty to prevent the perpetrator, Daniel Castellanos, from sexually molesting children. The complaint also alleges that the defendants owed a duty to investigate and not employ the perpetrator and failed to conduct a reasonable

investigation of the alleged abuse.

According to the complaint, the Defendants created a foreseeable risk of Castellanos abusing minor congregants, including Plaintiffs in the following ways:

- ✦ Failure to report Castellanos to the police;
- ✦ Failure to train the Jehovah's Witness Elders and leadership to report to law enforcement allegations of an adult sexually abusing a child;
- ✦ Failure to screen or exclude Castellanos from contact with children within the Jehovah's Witness Organization;
- ✦ Failure to warn Plaintiffs' parents and parents of similarly situated children of the risk posed by Castellanos after they learned or had reason to learn that he had sexually abused a minor; and
- ✦ Failure to implement and/or enforce common sense policies to prevent child abuse.

This lawsuit is one of several sexual abuse lawsuits that have been filed in the last year against the Jehovah's Witnesses by The Zalkin Law Firm. The firm now has similar cases pending in California, Connecticut, New Mexico, Vermont and Ohio. Recently, the Zalkin Law firm represented a victim of childhood sexual abuse at a San Diego Jehovah's Witnesses congregation who was awarded \$13.5 million in damages in a similar case. Irwin Zalkin expects to be admitted *pro hac vice* in this case.

About The Zalkin Law Firm

With offices in San Diego and New York, [The Zalkin Law Firm](#) is one of the leading sexual abuse and personal injury firms in the country. The firm's lawyers have represented hundreds of survivors of childhood sexual abuse and achieved groundbreaking results in numerous high-profile clergy abuse cases across the United States. The Zalkin Law Firm has aggressively represented survivors who suffered child sexual abuse and sexual assault while members of religious and other organizations, including the Catholic Church, foster care, Boy Scouts, recovery homes, foreign student exchange programs, colleges and the Jehovah's Witnesses. The firm has negotiated over \$200 million in settlements for victims in Catholic clergy sex abuse cases.

About Kristian Roggendorf

For over 14 years, [Kristian Roggendorf](#) has been at the forefront of representing victims of child abuse in Oregon. He has helped define Oregon law through successful trials and appeals in lawsuits against the Boy Scouts, the Catholic Church, the Mormon Church, public school districts, and the Oregon Department of Human Services, among others. Recently, Mr. Roggendorf made headlines bringing lawsuits against the Archdiocese of Portland for abuse by notorious child molester Fr. Maurice Grammond, and has over 30 reported cases to his credit, including some of the most significant Oregon child abuse decisions over the last 14 years.