

HOMELESS PANHANDLER TRIUMPHS

[SOUTH PINELLAS Edition]

St. Petersburg Times - St. Petersburg, Fla.

Author: ABHI RAGHUNATHAN

Date: Jun 19, 2007

Start Page: 1.B

Section: LOCAL/REGIONAL (LCR)

Text Word Count: 375

Document Text

Since he stayed on a median, it's legal. Though city codes prohibit it in some other areas.

Steve Angel didn't just shrug when he was given a \$73.50 fine for panhandling. He fought the citation in court.

On Monday, he won.

After listening to a few minutes of testimony and arguments, Judge William Overton found Angel not guilty. As he sauntered out, Angel smiled and held two thumbs up.

Officer Nicolas Bevan said he cited Angel, 49, after he saw him holding a sign asking for money. The reason: "conducting business on median."

But as Summer Vecchioli, Angel's attorney, pointed out,

panhandling on a median is perfectly legal under the

statute the officer accused Angel of violating. Plus, Vecchioli got officer Bevan to admit that he hadn't seen Angel walk into the streets or solicit any business. He was standing on the median, smiling and holding a sign.

"He was simply asking for a donation," she said.

Angel, who is homeless, spends most nights in the parking lot behind the Fleming Law Group, and considers attorney Lucas Fleming and other employees friends. When he told them about his May 5 citation, the law practice decided to represent him.

Officer Bevan declined to comment after the hearing. Police spokesman Bill Proffitt said officers would be told to cite panhandlers under the state statute only if they stepped off medians and into roadways. City codes prohibit panhandling in some other areas, like parts of downtown and near ATMs.

"The ruling makes sense given what the statute says," Proffitt said.

Cecilia Miller, 56, who has seen Angel panhandling, showed up at court and gave him \$40 for dinner after the judge's decision.

"I'm just so happy right now," Angel said, holding his girlfriend Maryann Cooney's hand. "I'm just so, so happy."

Times photographer Cherie Diez contributed to this report. Abhi Raghunathan can be reached at araghunathan@sptimes.com or (727) 893- 8372.

[Illustration]

Caption: PHOTO, CHERIE DIEZ - Times: Steve Angel chats with his attorney Summer Vecchioli of the Fleming Law Group outside the South Pinellas Courthouse after his ticket for panhandling was dismissed. PHOTO: Steve Angel was fined, he told his friends at the Fleming Law Group, who agreed to help. (Ran State / Suncoast edition)

Credit: Times Staff Writer

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction or distribution is prohibited without permission.

Free Obituaries Search Obituaries.Archives.com

1) Type In Someone's Name 2) Find Their Obituary Instantly!

Public Arrest Records InstantCheckmate.com

1) Enter Name and State. 2) Access Full Background Checks Instantly.

The average utility bill www.wattzon.com

See the average utility bills for homes like yours

Search for obituaries www.ancestry.com

Search Census, Birth, Marriage And Death Records - Start A Free Trial.



AdChoices

Abstract (Document Summary)

"I'm just so happy right now," [Steve Angel] said, holding his girlfriend Maryann Cooney's hand. "I'm just so, so happy."

As Summer Vecchioli, Angel's attorney, pointed out, panhandling on a median is perfectly legal under the statute the officer accused Angel of violating. Plus, Vecchioli got officer [Nicolas Bevan] to admit that he hadn't seen Angel walk into the streets or solicit any business. He was standing on the median, smiling and holding a sign.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction or distribution is prohibited without permission.