Vanity Unfair

DMV to biker: “HIV POS” plate? Not!

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A 40-year-old man with AIDS is suing the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) for $5 million, claiming the agency discriminated against him when it denied him a license plate reading “HIV POS.” Kevin Dimmick said the DMV violated his civil rights when it deemed his proposed plate offensiv. Dimmick, founder of a support group for HIV positive heterosexuals, planned to the put the license plate on his Harley Davidson. “I wanted to show people it’s OK to be HIV positive. I expected to encounter some bigotry, but not at the state DMV.”

Evan Nossoff, a DMV spokesperson, said, “If a substantial number of people would be offended, we don’t issue the plate. Here, ’HIV POS’ might be seen by some as laudatory, but others are offended-not just bigots or gay-bashers, but those with HIV.” But the DMV has not yet located someone with HIV who finds it offensive.

Dimmick is representing himself in court with cocounsel. “When you’re the first person to take an AIDS discrimination suit against the state and do it on your own behalf, it’s overwhelming,” Dimmick said. “I have to win this case. If the state can discriminate against someone for being positive, we have some real problems.” State Attorney General Dan Lungren, the man behind last summer’s raid of the Cannabis Buyers Club, is representing the DMV. “I thought at first Lungren was just anti-drugs, but I guess he’s anti-AIDS,” Dimmick said. “He should be protecting my civil rights. I don’t mind him on the case-he’s just supposed to be on the other side of the table.” A court date had not been set at presstime.

The DMV once approved a plate that read “HIV NOT” but recalled it after protests. Plates reading “HIV DOC,” “HIV TEST” and even “HIV BU” have been issued by the DMV. “We routinely try to steer away from anything controversial. We encourage people to use bumper stickers,” said DMV Director Sally Reed. “A bumper sticker on my motorcycle?” Dimmick asked. “I don’t have a bumper.”

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