

# Judge Set To Make Key Decision In Local Church Sex Abuse Case

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POSTED: 06:19 PM PST Mar 01, 2016 UPDATED: 01:08 PM PST Mar 04, 2016

Civil Lawsuit Against Presbyterian Church Moves Forward

## **SANTA BARBARA, Calif. -**

A Santa Barbara judge is expected to hand down a decision in a civil lawsuit involving the Presbyterian Church.

Attorney Tim Hale said, "It's really a battle of secrecy."

Two women and a teenage girl are suing leaders of the Presbytery of Santa Barbara, located in Goleta.

They accuse church officials of covering up their sexual abuse at the hands of former Carpinteria youth pastor Louis Bristol in 2012 and 2013.

The victims are not only seeking monetary damages, they want the church to be more transparent.

"My clients want the public to know every instance where a Presbyterian Church leader has learned of a sexual abuse of a child by another church leader but has failed to report it to law enforcement," Hale said. "Conversely, the Presbyterian Church and their attorney's are fighting to keep that information secret and out of the public eye."

The Presbytery of Santa Barbara, governs churches from Cambria to Thousand Oaks.

The civil lawsuit claims another alleged sexual predator was shuffled around from church to church.

KEYT/KCOY/KKFX will not to reveal the man's identity because he's never been charged.

"He went from Santa Barbara to Oxnard, to Atlanta and ultimately to Ohio. He was not dismissed until 2012, despite the fact that they first received a report of sexual abuse of a child by him in 1984," Hale said.

A judge will decide if lawyers can move forward and try to prove the existence of a 'policy of secrecy' and force the church to expose church leaders accused of sexual abuse.

"This decision will apply to every institution that has any type of policy of secrecy related to sexual abuse up and down the state," Hale said.

Hale said the victims are gearing up for a fight.

"If the court rules in our favor, we will see a battle as we did with the Boy Scouts, as we did with the Franciscan Friars where they opposed that ruling all the way to the states highest court, the California Supreme Court," Hale said.

KEYT/KCOY/KKFX tried to contact a lawyer representing the Presbytery of Santa Barbara, but was unable to reach anyone.

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