

Fairfax County General District Court

4110 Chain Bridge Road

Fairfax, VA 22030

Attn: Traffic Judge

Your Honor,

My name is John Colwell and I was recently in your county and given a ticket for "Soliciting a ride," and another ticket for "Walking on the highway." For over two years, I have been traveling the country as a street preacher. I am an ordained and licensed minister of the gospel. A few months ago, however, I received a job to deliver trucks to help facilitate my earnings. It has been very hard to survive as a "street preacher."

On the day I was ticketed, I had just come from Salisbury, Maryland where I had dropped a truck. After I dropped the truck in Maryland, I tried to purchase a Greyhound two month, "Discovery Pass" from the Salisbury depot. This is a pass that allows the user two months of unlimited fares. Because the station wasn't an actual Greyhound terminal I couldn't purchase a pass, only a ticket. I also tried to call the Greyhound, "one eight hundred number" but was again not allowed to purchase it over the phone. This was very frustrating, as I had to pick up my next truck in Dublin, Virginia the next day. In order for me to buy a bus ticket out of Maryland, it would have cost me over a hundred and sixty dollar. Well, I had just started saving up the five hundred and fifty dollars to buy the two month pass, so I didn't see the practicality of spending one fifty of it on a one way ticket for a few hundred miles.

Because I am a truck driver, and also a preacher, I "hitch" rides with truck drivers and on occasion from other people. I have found that in doing this, I am serving the Lord while at the same time blessing people by sharing my testimony and the goodness of the gospel message. I have had occasion to do this my entire life, and I believe that God blesses my endeavors. At the same time, I write on my own web sites concerning my various encounters. This has been very fulfilling and insightful as I experience the true state of affairs in American "Christianity."

Well, I have been doing this for years and seldom have any "bad" encounters with the police. A number of times, I have had the police help me, and one time an officer even asked if I had enough money to eat. I told him that I did, but I appreciated his kind offer. It is seldom that I have ever had an encounter that I had in Virginia. Perhaps, the officer had had a bad day or something, but I feel as if I was ticketed without asking for a full or proper explanation of my situation. I would like to mention that the town of Dublin, Virginia where the Volvo factory is has no Greyhound station anyways, so this was another reason why I just continued to hitch hike after leaving Maryland.

I had no idea that it was against the law to hitch hike in your state. In all the times that I have visited Virginia, I have never seen this posted. I was on the Interstate, but I have seldom seen this infraction enforced. I have walked for over twenty five miles in more than a few states on the Interstates and have been passed by many an officer. Having been stopped by your officer, I was forced to take a cab which cost me twenty dollars for a few mile ride, and was only then let off where the closest Greyhound was another twenty miles with no public transportation other than another cab, which would have cost another hundred dollar's easily.

You have my apologies, but I cannot in good conscience plead anything but "Not Guilty," and I wish that you would try me in my absence. I especially didn't appreciate the way that the ticket was written as "Soliciting a Ride?" Hitch hiking goes back one hundred years and I believe that it is a part of "the American culture." By writing a charge of "Soliciting a ride," the charge could be interpreted any number of unfavorable ways and be questioned by a prospective employer? I believe most judges are fair, unbiased and understanding; therefore I have to plead "Not Guilty," and ask you to try me in my absence. Nonetheless, if I thought it necessary, I would return to stand in front of you to plead my case.

Sincerely in Christ,

John Colwell

www.thehandofthelord.org

P. S. The officer was handed my license and wrote the ticket to my address recorded when my license was issued five or six years ago. There was an address correction on the back that states my new mailing address as: PO Box 4543, Joplin, Missouri 64803 Could you please have the court update this.