



Hate Church Ordered to Pay 11 Million Dollars

By [Kevin Wayne](#)

Baltimore, MD - A Baltimore jury has awarded the father of a Marine whose funeral was targeted by Fred Phelps' anti-gay group nearly \$11m in damages.

Albert Snyder sued the Kansas-based Westboro Baptist Church for protests that he says destroyed his only chance to bury in peace the son he lost in Iraq. He filed a complaint in June 2006.

According to a Reuters report, the jury in the case determined that the leaders of the fundamentalist Westboro Baptist Church invaded the family's privacy when they picketed the funeral of Lance Cpl. Matthew Snyder last year outside St. John Roman Catholic Church in Westminster, Maryland.

The protestors, three adults and four children, reportedly marched outside Snyder's funeral in March 2006 carrying signs with messages such as "Thank God for dead soldiers." The church, lead by Phelps, protests military funerals because they say the Iraq war is punishment for the nation's tolerance of homosexuality.

Westboro Baptist Church, is not affiliated with a larger denomination and is made up mostly of Fred Phelps's extended family members. Phelps and his church gained national attention when they protested at the funeral of Matthew Shephard with signs that read "No Fags in Heaven" and "God Hates Fags."

The funeral protests have lead 22 states, including Illinois, to enact or propose laws to limit the rights of protesters at funerals. Congress has passed a law prohibiting such protests at federal cemeteries.

This is the first individual lawsuit brought against Westboro Baptist Church which has picketed hundreds of military and other funerals around the country in the past two years.

The defense says it will appeal.