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Contact: Cam Macdonald
518-434-3125
info@govjustice.org

Government Justice Center Fights for Vocational Freedom

The Government Justice Center (GJC), a non-partisan legal center founded to protect New Yorkers from improper government action, today filed a case against New York State for ordering an equine massage therapist to close her business or face potential civil or criminal penalties.

GJC represents Lori Smith, a Certified Equine Sports Massage Therapist and horse enthusiast, who New York ordered to cease and desist her horse massage therapy business, "Five Feathers Equine Massage," because she is not a licensed veterinarian.

Horse massage is non-invasive and has similar benefits to human massage – it can increase endorphins, improve blood circulation, muscle tone, and flexibility. Horse massage therapists do not diagnose and treat animals in any medical way, and the "Five Feathers Equine Massage" website made that clear.

Even though massage therapy courses are not offered in veterinary schools, New York State claims horse massage therapists like Ms. Smith practice veterinary medicine. New York's overbroad definition of veterinary medicine, however, could also apply to anyone providing routine care to their horses, other livestock, or household pets.

"New York State is arbitrarily putting an unnecessary burden on an individual trying to exercise her right to earn a living and harmlessly pursue her passion" said Cam Macdonald, executive director of GJC. "Requiring eight or more years of unrelated schooling for equine massage therapy not only frustrates Lori from exercising her rights, but it also needlessly over-regulates the routine care of beloved animals and pets."

The Government Justice Center, based in Albany, is an independent, not-for-profit legal center that provides pro-bono representation and legal services to protect the rights of New Yorkers in the face of improper action by state or local governments. Taxpayers can request the GJC's assistance [here](#).