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**“USA NEXT” MISAPPROPRIATED COUPLES’
IMAGE FOR ANTI-GAY AD CAMPAIGN**

Couple: Image Stolen for Campaign Against AARP

WASHINGTON, DC - Conservative front organization USA Next was accused today of illegally using a gay couple’s wedding photo in an anti-gay ad campaign supporting President Bush’s plan to privatize Social Security.

The couple in the photo, Richard M. Raymen and Steven P. Hansen of Portland, Oregon, have come forward through an attorney to demand that USA Next stop using their image, and that the organization publicly apologize for using their image in a homophobic and libelous way. The demand, contained in a letter sent today to USA Next Chairman and CEO Charles Jarvis, references the couples’ right to seek damages for the misappropriation of their image.

In one version of the USA Next advertisement disseminated widely on the Internet last week, and aired repeatedly by television news programs nationwide, the couple’s image, superimposed with a green checkmark, is side-by-side a picture of a US soldier with a red “X” across it. Below the photos is the phrase “The REAL AARP Agenda.”

A copy of the ad can be viewed online here:

<http://www.dailykos.com/story/2005/2/21/164929/948>

"In 2004, our clients allowed their picture to be taken at their public celebration, as couples getting married do every day," Christopher Wolf, a partner in the Washington, DC office of the New York-based law firm Proskauer Rose LLP and counsel for Raymen and Hansen. . "They did not volunteer to be models for a 2005 right-wing hate campaign, and never would have consented to having their images plastered in an ad of any kind, much less the one USA Next chose to run. USA Next has violated the law and must take responsibility for the consequences. Tort law is quite clear that USA Next acted illegally."

"The USA Next ad communicates the false message that gay marriages generally, and our clients specifically, are the antithesis of supporting American troops during wartime," said Wolf. "Gay marriage, and our clients’ ceremony, have nothing to do with support of the troops. Our clients are patriotic Americans who strongly support our service members."

USA Next's ad campaign has generated heated debate about the organization.. Ramen and Hansen have been the subject of hate-filled messages and ridicule as a result of the ad campaign, and have suffered a significant invasion of privacy.

"We never signed up to be Harry and Louise for a hate-mongering group," Raymen said, referring to the fictional couple used in television commercials to scuttle then-First Lady Hillary Clinton's health care proposal. "USA Next is illegally using our photo to portray us as a threat to American values. How would any citizen like having their image stolen and broadcast for the purpose of tarring our troops and suggesting that you're un-American?"

On behalf of Raymen and Hansen, Wolf wrote USA Next today demanding that the organization immediately stop using photos of the couple and that it publicly apologize for the ongoing harm it is causing.

"As our clients contemplate their full legal remedies, we are writing to demand that you immediately cease and desist using any photograph of our clients and that you publicly apologize to them for the use you already have made, and the harm you have already caused," Wolf wrote to USA Next.

Wolf said his clients seriously are considering filing suit against USA Next but, regardless, use of the photo must stop.