

New Jersey law firm to fight Pansy Ho-MGM Mirage opponent

A New Jersey law firm representing Hong Kong businesswoman Pansy Ho has asked three Web hosting companies to take down the Web site of a religious group disseminating negative information about MGM Mirage's designated business partner in its Macau operations.

Gilbert Brooks, an attorney with Wolf, Block, Schorr and Solis-Cohen of Cherry Hill, N.J. sent a letter in late March warning that the Web hosting companies are legally liable for the content of New York-based Family Focus Coalition's online site, which includes a mass of newspaper clippings and two reportedly confidential reports detailing personal information about Pansy Ho and her billionaire father, Macau casino magnate Stanley Ho.

"It is an outrageous attempt to unfairly smear Ms. Ho. Knowingly or not, you are conspiring in tortuous (sic) activity, in particular the disclosure of private facts," the letter reads, later citing the publication of Pansy Ho's U.S. Social Security number, personal addresses and telephone numbers as well as credit records as examples of private information disclosed on Family Focus' Web site.

Brooks also alleges the publication of copyrighted information in the form of news clippings and says that, too, is reason enough to end Family Focus' online presence.

The coalition's president, the Rev. Gary Kellner, with the help of an unnamed attorney responded with a searing letter of his own. In it, Kellner cites several legal precedents, including truth as a defense against defamation charges, supporting his group's right to disseminate the confidential information, which alleges all manner of organized crime links

and criminal behavior on the parts of Pansy and Stanley Ho. Kellner has said previously that he would invite a legal showdown over publishing the reports in question.

“On the one hand, we would welcome legal action on your part as we would be anxious to schedule depositions of Stanley Ho, Pansy Ho, Terry Lanni (MGM Mirage’s chairman and CEO),” Kellner’s letter reads. “On the other hand, your allegations against Family Focus are so unsupportable under the law that I would have to instruct our attorney to seek sanctions against you.”

Kellner’s group has vowed to press on with its attack, which started in February two days before the Nevada Gaming Control Board approved Pansy Ho’s suitability as a partner with MGM Mirage. The Nevada Gaming Commission last month followed the control board’s recommendation.

New Jersey has not yet ruled, however, becoming the next battleground for Family Focus’ fight. At least one New Jersey legislator, Assemblyman Richard Merkt, says he supports the group’s efforts. Merkt is a former deputy attorney general in New Jersey’s Division of Gaming Enforcement.

Sources at MGM Mirage believe Family Focus is backed by the company’s competitors in Macau’s gambling market, where rivals Wynn Resorts and Las Vegas Sands currently operate. Kellner has repeatedly denied his group is funded by casino interests anywhere.