

No. _____

**In The
Supreme Court of the United States**

—◆—

KODY BROWN, MERI BROWN, JANELLE BROWN,
CHRISTINE BROWN, ROBYN SULLIVAN,

Petitioners,

v.

JEFFREY BUHMAN, in his official capacity,

Respondent.

—◆—

**On Petition For A Writ Of Certiorari
To The United States Court Of Appeals
For The Tenth Circuit**

—◆—

PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI

—◆—

JONATHAN TURLEY
(Counsel of Record)
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON
UNIVERSITY LAW SCHOOL
2000 H St., N.W.
Washington, DC 20052
(202) 994-7001
jturley@law.gwu.edu

THOMAS M. HUFF
Attorney-at-Law
P.O. Box 2248
Leesburg, VA 20177
thuff@law.gwu.edu

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

Under this Court’s voluntary cessation doctrine, “a defendant’s voluntary cessation of a challenged practice does not deprive a federal court of its power to determine the legality of the practice” unless that defendant can meet “the formidable burden of showing that it is absolutely clear the allegedly wrongful behavior could not reasonably be expected to recur.” *Friends of the Earth, Inc. v. Laidlaw Envtl. Servs. (TOC), Inc.*, 528 U.S. 167, 189-90 (2000) (citations omitted).

Some courts of appeals – such as the Second, Third, Eleventh, and D.C. Circuits – have held that this requires the defendant’s “complete[] and irrevocabl[e] eradicat[ion of] the effects of the alleged violation,” *Qassim v. Bush*, 466 F.3d 1073, 1075 (D.C. Cir. 2006) (citation omitted), as well as a probing inquiry into its “timing and content” to ensure that “the defendant has not changed course simply to deprive the court of jurisdiction.” *Harrell v. Fla. Bar*, 608 F.3d 1241, 1266 (11th Cir. 2010). Other courts of appeals – such as the Tenth Circuit below – have adopted a more permissive approach that more generally “assess[es] the likelihood that defendants will recommence the challenged . . . conduct,” App. 32, and allows for a finding of mootness “even if the [change in behavior] was tactical” and in order “to end the [plaintiff’s] litigation.” App. 53-55. The questions presented are:

QUESTIONS PRESENTED – Continued

1. When the government seeks to moot a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of a statute, to what extent, if at all, can it do so by adopting a new non-enforcement policy during the pendency of litigation?

2. When the government publicly threatens a party with prosecution under a statute, to what extent, if at all, can it later moot by voluntary cessation a subsequently filed lawsuit challenging its constitutionality?

3. When a district court makes underlying findings of fact in the course of adjudicating a claim under the voluntary cessation doctrine, under what standard of review should those findings be examined on appeal?

PARTIES TO THE PROCEEDING

Petitioners are Kody Brown, Meri Brown, Janelle Brown, Christine Brown, and Robyn Sullivan, all of whom were plaintiffs-appellees below.

Respondent Jeffrey R. Buhman was the only defendant-appellant before the court of appeals, and is being sued in his official capacity as County Attorney for Utah County Attorney's Office. Gary Herbert, Governor of the State of Utah; and Mark Shurtleff, Attorney General of the State of Utah, were named as additional defendants in the complaint, but were dismissed by the district court.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
QUESTIONS PRESENTED	i
PARTIES TO THE PROCEEDING.....	iii
PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI	1
OPINIONS BELOW.....	1
JURISDICTION.....	1
STATUTORY PROVISIONS INVOLVED	2
INTRODUCTION	2
STATEMENT OF THE CASE.....	3
REASONS FOR GRANTING THE PETITION ...	8
I. The Tenth Circuit’s Decision Deepens a Split in Authority Among the Courts of Appeals	9
A. The Courts of Appeals are divided on the appropriate legal test for adjudica- tion of the voluntary cessation doc- trine	9
B. The Courts of Appeals are divided on the appropriate standard of review ap- plicable to the voluntary cessation doctrine.....	14
II. The Questions Presented Implicate a Recurring Issue of National Importance, and This Case Presents a Highly Suitable Vehicle for Resolving Them	18

TABLE OF CONTENTS – Continued

	Page
III. The Tenth Circuit’s Decision Misconstrues This Court’s Precedents	21
CONCLUSION.....	25

APPENDIX

United States Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit, Panel Opinion, April 11, 2016 (as amended May 13, 2016 and reissued nunc pro tunc to the original filing date)	App. 1
United States District Court for the District of Utah, Memorandum Decision and Judgment, August 27, 2014 (declaring unconstitutional the cohabitation provision of Utah Code Ann. § 76-7-101(1)).....	App. 60
United States District Court for the District of Utah, Memorandum Decision and Judgment, June 22, 2015 (denying Respondent’s motion to dismiss the lawsuit as moot under the vol- untary cessation doctrine)	App. 66
Circuit Court Order Denying Petition for Re- hearing En Banc, May 13, 2016.....	App. 81

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES

Page

CASES

<i>Already, LLC v. Nike, Inc.</i> , 133 S. Ct. 721 (2013)	7
<i>Ashcroft v. Iqbal</i> , 556 U.S. 662 (2009)	23
<i>Bell v. City of Boise</i> , 709 F.3d 890 (9th Cir. 2013)	11, 12
<i>Cook v. City of Chicago</i> , 192 F.3d 693 (7th Cir. 1999)	18
<i>DeJohn v. Temple Univ.</i> , 537 F.3d 301 (3rd Cir. 2008)	10, 11
<i>Frazier v. Simmons</i> , 254 F.3d 1247 (10th Cir. 2001)	23
<i>Friends of the Earth, Inc. v. Laidlaw Envtl. Servs. (TOC), Inc.</i> , 528 U.S. 167 (2000).....	5, 21, 22
<i>Harrell v. Fla. Bar</i> , 608 F.3d 1241 (11th Cir. 2010)	12
<i>Harrison & Burrowes Bridge Constructors, Inc. v. Cuomo</i> , 981 F.2d 50 (2nd Cir. 1992)	15
<i>Holt Civic Club v. City of Tuscaloosa</i> , 439 U.S. 60 (1978).....	24
<i>Hummel v. St. Joseph Cnty. Bd. of Comm'rs</i> , 817 F.3d 1010 (7th Cir. 2016).....	13
<i>Kikimura v. Turner</i> , 28 F.3d 592 (7th Cir. 1994).....	16
<i>Lawrence v. Texas</i> , 539 U.S. 558 (2003)	3
<i>Los Angeles County v. Davis</i> , 440 U.S. 625 (1979).....	10, 21, 22

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES – Continued

	Page
<i>McCormack v. Herzog</i> , 788 F.3d 1017 (9th Cir. 2015)	11
<i>Mhany Mgmt. v. Cnty. of Nassau</i> , 819 F.3d 581 (2nd Cir. 2016)	10
<i>Obergefell v. Hodges</i> , 135 S. Ct. 2584 (2015)	20
<i>Pensacola Motor Sales Inc. v. Eastern Shore Toyota, LLC</i> , 684 F.3d 1211 (11th Cir. 2012)	15
<i>Qassim v. Bush</i> , 466 F.3d 1073 (D.C. Cir. 2006)	13
<i>Rio Grande Silvery Minnow v. Bureau of Reclamation</i> , 601 F.3d 1096 (10th Cir. 2010)	16, 17, 18, 22
<i>True the Vote, Inc. v. IRS</i> , ___ F.3d ___, Nos. 14-5316, 15-5013, 2016 U.S. App. LEXIS 14375 (D.C. Cir. Aug. 5, 2016)	12, 13, 14
<i>United States v. Concentrated Phosphate Exp. Ass’n</i> , 393 U.S. 199 (1968)	22
<i>Virginia v. Am. Booksellers Ass’n, Inc.</i> , 484 U.S. 383 (1988)	20
 STATUTES	
28 U.S.C. § 1254(1)	1
42 U.S.C. § 1983	1
Utah Code Ann. § 76-7-101(1)	2
 RULE	
Fed. R. Civ. P. 8(a)(1)	23

PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI

Petitioners seek a writ of certiorari to review the judgment of the United States Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit.



OPINIONS BELOW

The decision of the court of appeals is reported at 822 F.3d 1151 (10th Cir. 2016), and is reprinted in the Appendix to the Petition (“App.”) at App. 1. The unpublished opinion of the district court that rejected the government’s invocation of the voluntary cessation doctrine is reprinted at App. 66, and its judgment declaring Petitioners to be prevailing parties for purposes of 42 U.S.C. § 1983 is reprinted at App. 60. The district court’s subsequent decision on the merits (not under direct review here) is reported at 947 F. Supp. 2d 1170 (D. Utah 2013).



JURISDICTION

The court of appeals issued its decision on April 11, 2016, and denied Petitioners’ timely petition for rehearing en banc on May 13, 2016. On the same day, it issued an amended version of its panel opinion. This Court’s jurisdiction is invoked pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1254(1).



STATUTORY PROVISIONS INVOLVED

Utah Code Ann. § 76-7-101(1) states: “A person is guilty of bigamy when, knowing he has a husband or wife or knowing the other person has a husband or wife, the person purports to marry another person or cohabits with another person.”



INTRODUCTION

The court of appeals’ judgment in this case continues a square and acknowledged conflict over the applicable test and standard of review concerning this Court’s voluntary cessation doctrine. A panel of the Tenth Circuit below held that a newly adopted prosecution policy – announced during the pendency of litigation and freely revocable at the discretion of future prosecutors – was sufficient to moot Petitioners’ challenge to a criminal statute under which they had previously been publicly threatened with prosecution. That decision directly conflicts with decisions of the Second, Third, Eleventh, and D.C. Circuits, which require a defendant’s cessation of conduct to be “complete[]” and “irrevocabl[e],” and to have not been motivated by a desire to deprive the court of jurisdiction and avoid the consequences of the lawsuit.

In addition, the Tenth Circuit panel below used a *de novo* standard of review to set aside the district court’s factual conclusions regarding the government’s motivations for changing its prosecution policy during the pendency of litigation. As the Tenth Circuit has

previously acknowledged, this holding conflicts with decisions of the Second, Seventh, and D.C. Circuits, which apply abuse-of-discretion or clear-error standards of review.

Both questions presented are recurring and important ones. And because the voluntary cessation doctrine regularly arises in the context of constitutional challenges to state statutes, allowing this discrepancy in federal law to continue unresolved would enable states within the Tenth Circuit to strategically insulate themselves from constitutional challenges in ways that other courts of appeals do not permit. This Court's review is warranted.



STATEMENT OF THE CASE

At its core, this case concerns whether a Utah statute that bans married person from engaging in voluntary cohabitation with other persons is unconstitutional – either as a violation of Petitioners' sexual privacy rights protected by this Court's decision in *Lawrence v. Texas*, 539 U.S. 558 (2003), or their religious liberty rights protected by the First Amendment. As explained below, however, this constitutional question is currently blocked from continuing on the merits due to a broad interpretation of this Court's voluntary cessation doctrine by the Tenth Circuit, which has created a split of authority concerning its proper application and significantly expanded its scope.

1. Petitioners – Kody Brown, Meri Brown, Janelle Brown, Christine Brown, and Robyn Sullivan – are five adults who cohabit as a plural family. The family has only one recorded marriage license (that of Kody and Meri), but all live together in a plural relationship, and are all part of a religious group that believes in polygamy as a core religious practice. Beginning in 2010, the TLC Network began to document their lives as a plural family on a popular reality television show called “The Sister Wives.” App. 3-5; 947 F. Supp. 2d at 1178.

2. The day after the first episode aired, Utah state officials publicly denounced the Brown family as criminals and opened an investigation under the state’s anti-bigamy statute, which – unlike that of other states – prohibits not only the practice of polygamy, but also the mere practice of cohabitation by married persons. App. 3, 5-6; 947 F. Supp. 2d at 1179. Prosecutors later gave public interviews discussing the Brown family and their alleged crime of polygamy. 947 F. Supp. 2d at 1179. The Respondent, through his subordinate, publicly accused the Brown family of committing felonies every night on television and stated that “The Sister Wives” television program would make their prosecution “easier.” App. 69-70; 947 F. Supp. 2d at 1179.

3. In response, the Browns suffered economic, professional, and personal costs. In an effort to avoid prosecution they fled to Nevada and filed the present lawsuit on July 13, 2011, seeking (among other things) declaratory relief that the Utah anti-bigamy statute

was unconstitutional – either on its face or as applied against them. App. 6-7. Prosecutors stated that the Brown’s move to Nevada would not prevent them from prosecuting the family and continued with their criminal investigation; the government responded to the lawsuit with a motion to dismiss. App. 6-7, 8-12. On February 3, 2012, the district court denied a motion to dismiss with respect to Respondent Utah County Attorney Mr. Buhman, concluding that the Browns faced a credible fear of prosecution from his office. App. 66-67.

4. Approximately four months later on May 31, 2012, Respondent Buhman filed a new motion to dismiss, this time based on a newly adopted “office policy” that he would not enforce the law against the Browns or others who cohabitated for religious reasons. App. 12, 67. The district court again denied the motion, citing this Court’s instruction that “a defendant’s voluntary cessation of a challenged practice does not deprive a federal court of its power to determine the legality of the practice,” *Laidlaw*, 528 U.S. at 189, and that any assertion to the contrary faces the “heavy burden of persuading the court that the challenged conduct cannot reasonably be expected to start up again.” *Id.*; see also App. 13-14, 66-79. In this case, the district court noted that the government had not abandoned its constitutional defense of the statute, see App. 74, and that its new prosecution policy was “at most, an exercise of prosecutorial discretion that could be reversed at any time.” App. 73, 75. The district court found that Respondent’s adoption of a new non-prosecution policy “happened over eighteen months after the alleged conduct giving rise to the threat of prosecution of

Plaintiffs,” which it found “[could] not be considered a ‘quick repudiation’ of the actions initially taken against Plaintiffs.” App. 70. The district court further concluded that “[t]he timing of Mr. Buhman’s adoption of the policy at issue suggests that the policy was not motivated by a belief that prosecution of Plaintiffs for violating Utah’s anti-bigamy statute would be improper, but instead was motivated by a desire to prevent this court from reaching the merits of Plaintiffs’ claims.” App. 70-71.

5. The district court then went on to rule for the Browns on the merits, striking down the portion of the Utah anti-bigamy statute prohibiting plural cohabitation (while leaving in place its prohibition on polygamy). App. 14-17, 64-65; see also generally 947 F. Supp. 2d 1170.

6. On appeal, the government did not challenge the district court’s decision on the voluntary cessation doctrine on either the facts or the law, but instead devoted its appellate briefs to defending the statute’s constitutionality, arguing among other things that it was an important tool for the investigation of plural families and the facilitation of search warrants. On December 11, 2015, however, the Tenth Circuit sua sponte asked the parties to brief whether Respondent’s new prosecution policy announced in his May 22, 2012 declaration rendered Petitioners’ claims against him moot. App. 20-21.

7. On April 11, 2016, the Court of Appeals reversed and vacated the decision of the district court,

holding that the case was moot under the voluntary cessation doctrine. Though acknowledging this Court's instruction that a defendant carries "the formidable burden of showing that it is absolutely clear the allegedly wrongful behavior could not reasonably be expected to recur," *Already, LLC v. Nike, Inc.*, 133 S. Ct. 721, 727 (2013), the Tenth Circuit nonetheless concluded that the government's discretionary change to its prosecution policy was sufficient to moot a legal challenge to a criminal statute by persons formerly threatened with prosecution under it. See generally App. 33-57. The panel acknowledged that "Mr. Buhman may have been motivated to institute the UCAO [prosecution] Policy to end the Browns' litigation[,]” App. 53, but went on to conclude that "even if the UCAO Policy was tactical, this motive alone does not defeat mootness. The ultimate question is whether the UCAO Policy eliminates a credible threat of prosecution." *Id.* And operating under a de novo standard of review, App. 32, the panel supplanted several of the district court's underlying factual determinations in the process. See generally App. 34-57. The panel opinion also engaged in sua sponte fact finding on matters never considered by the district court at all, conducting, for example, an independent review of updated documentary evidence to conclude that Petitioners' move to Nevada to avoid prosecution had ameliorated the threat of their prosecution. App. 41-45.

8. The Tenth Circuit denied Petitioners' timely petition for rehearing en banc on May 13, 2016, and

issued an amended version of its panel opinion the same day. App. 82.

9. On August 3, 2016, the Hon. Sonia Sotomayor granted an application for a 30-day extension of time within which to file this petition. Because the conclusion of the 30-day extension period fell on September 10, 2016 – a Saturday – Petitioners timely file this petition on September 12, 2016.



REASONS FOR GRANTING THE PETITION

The courts of appeals are squarely divided over the extent to which the voluntary cessation doctrine permits the government to moot a constitutional challenge by changing its enforcement policy during the pendency of litigation, as well as whether a district court's factual findings under the doctrine should be reviewed *de novo* or for clear error or abuse of discretion.

The issue is an important and recurring one, and this case presents a highly suitable vehicle for resolving it. The Tenth Circuit, moreover, answered it incorrectly: It concluded that even where the government had publicly threatened Petitioners with prosecution under a criminal statute, a mere discretionary change in prosecution policy was sufficient to moot their challenge to the law. Compounding its error, the Tenth Circuit also reviewed the district court's underlying factual findings *de novo*, setting aside its conclusion

that the government's adoption of a new non-prosecution policy was done in an effort to avoid the consequences of the present lawsuit. This Court should grant certiorari to resolve the courts of appeals' disagreement, and should reverse the judgment below.

I. The Tenth Circuit's Decision Deepens a Split in Authority Among the Courts of Appeals.

A. The Courts of Appeals are divided on the appropriate legal test for adjudication of the voluntary cessation doctrine.

1. Under the law of the Second, Third, Ninth, Eleventh, and D.C. Circuits, a defendant's cessation of conduct is expressly required to be complete and irrevocable, and to have not been motivated by a desire to deprive the court of jurisdiction and avoid the consequences of the lawsuit. By contrast, the Tenth Circuit panel decision in this case adopts a more permissive approach that does not require the defendant's cessation to be irrevocable, and that does not bar a finding of mootness even in cases where the defendant's change in behavior "was a reaction to the [plaintiff's] suit." App. 39. As shown below, this has created a discrepancy in federal law whereby Petitioners would prevail under the law of the Second, Third, Ninth, Eleventh, and D.C. Circuits, and yet are presently unable to prevail under the alternative legal approach of the Tenth Circuit.

1. a. In *Mhany Mgmt. v. Cnty. of Nassau*, 819 F.3d 581 (2nd Cir. 2016), the Second Circuit held that a voluntary cessation claim requires a defendant to “demonstrate that (1) there is no reasonable expectation that the alleged violation will recur and (2) *interim relief or events have completely and irrevocably eradicated the effects of the alleged violation.*” *Id.* at 603 (emphasis added) (citing *Los Angeles County v. Davis*, 440 U.S. 625, 631 (1979)). Under this standard, the court held that a government defendant sued for maintaining a discriminatory land zoning scheme for housing could not moot the lawsuit under the voluntary cessation doctrine by announcing an eleventh-hour plan to instead use the land to build a courthouse. *Id.* at 603-05. The court noted the government’s “suspicious timing and circumstances” in announcing its decision to build a courthouse, which occurred “only on the eve of summary judgment motions,” *id.* at 604, and was accordingly “unpersuaded that the County ha[d] committed to this course permanently.” *Id.* Because it was not “absolutely clear” that the county would not return to the challenged conduct, the court denied its argument to moot the case. *Id.* at 605.

b. In *DeJohn v. Temple Univ.*, 537 F.3d 301 (3rd Cir. 2008), the Third Circuit also held that mootness requires “assurance that ‘there is no reasonable expectation . . .’ that the alleged violation will recur,” and that “interim relief or events have completely and irrevocably eradicated the effects of the alleged violation.” *Id.* at 309 (citations omitted). Under this standard, the court held that a government university

sued over a sexual harassment policy ultimately found to be unconstitutional was unable to moot a lawsuit by voluntarily revising the policy during the pendency of litigation. *Id.* at 308-09. Like the Second Circuit, the court conducted a searching inquiry into the suspicious timing and content of the revised policy, noting that the government university did not change its policy until the end of discovery, fewer than three weeks before a dispositive motion deadline in the case, *id.* at 309, and that it indeed continued even to defend the constitutionality of its policy. The court concluded that the “timing of the policy change, as well as its continued defense of its former policy,” failed to meet the formidable burden for voluntary cessation elucidated by this Court. *Id.* at 311.

c. In *McCormack v. Herzog*, 788 F.3d 1017 (9th Cir. 2015), the Ninth Circuit held for purposes of the voluntary cessation doctrine that “while a statutory change is usually enough to render a case moot, an executive action that is not governed by any clear or codified procedures cannot moot a claim.” *Id.* at 1025 (quotation and citations omitted). The court further held that even where a county prosecuting attorney office’s non-prosecution decision was presumed to be in good faith, this action was insufficient to moot the case, “especially when [the] abandonment seems timed to anticipate suit, and there is a probability of resumption.” *Id.* (quotation and citation omitted). Similarly, in *Bell v. City of Boise*, 709 F.3d 890 (9th Cir. 2013), the Ninth Circuit rejected a police department’s attempt

to moot a lawsuit challenging the enforcement of certain ordinances against homeless persons by adopting an updated enforcement policy via a non-legislative “Special Order,” concluding that it failed to meet the circuit’s requirement that the cessation policy be “entrenched” and “permanent.” *Id.* at 898-901.

d. In *Harrell v. Fla. Bar*, 608 F.3d 1241 (11th Cir. 2010), the Eleventh Circuit too held that voluntary cessation requires (among other things) that the “interim relief or events have *completely and irrevocably eradicated the effects of the alleged violation*,” *id.* at 1265 (emphasis added) (quotation and citation omitted), and further noted that “voluntary cessation of offensive conduct will only moot litigation if it is clear that the defendant has not changed course simply to deprive the court of jurisdiction.” *Id.* at 1266. Explaining this standard, the court observed that “the timing and content of a voluntary decision to cease a challenged activity are critical in determining the motive for the cessation.” Applying this test, the court held that a state bar failed to moot a lawsuit by changing its policy concerning attorney advertising slogans where the change happened only after notice of the lawsuit and was done in a clandestine manner. *Id.* at 1266-67.

e. Finally, in *True the Vote, Inc. v. IRS*, ___ F.3d ___, Nos. 14-5316, 15-5013, 2016 U.S. App. LEXIS 14375 (D.C. Cir. Aug. 5, 2016), the D.C. Circuit also held that voluntary cessation requires the defendant to show “that (1) there is no reasonable expectation that the conduct will recur and (2) interim relief or events have completely and irrevocably eradicated the effects

of the alleged violation.” *Id.* at *19-20; see also *Qassim v. Bush*, 466 F.3d 1073, 1075 (2006) (same).

f. By contrast, the Tenth Circuit panel in this case does not require a showing of “irrevocab[ility],” instead expressly acknowledging that the government’s act of alleged cessation – its issuance of a new non-prosecution policy during the pendency of litigation – is non-binding on future prosecutors. App. 48-51. Further contradicting its sister circuits above, the Tenth Circuit also reasoned that the doctrine remains available to defendants even where the cessation was strategically timed to address a lawsuit: “Even assuming the UCAO Policy was a reaction to the Browns’ suit, that does not necessarily make it suspect. A government official’s decision to adopt a policy in the context of litigation may actually make it more likely the policy will be followed, especially with respect to the plaintiffs in that particular case.” App. 39 (citation omitted). The panel additionally rejected application of the “capable of repetition” exception to mootness, reasoning that “any renewed threat of prosecution would leave [Petitioners] ample time and opportunity to challenge the statute.” App. 28.

g. The Seventh Circuit has adopted a similarly permissive approach that does not require a showing that a defendant’s cessation be irrevocable, and that affords government actors a presumption of good faith. See *Hummel v. St. Joseph Cnty. Bd. of Comm’rs*, 817 F.3d 1010, 1023 (7th Cir. 2016).

h. As a result of this conflict of authority, a government defendant's power to moot a constitutional challenge by announcing a new prosecution policy depends entirely upon the jurisdiction in which suit was filed. State and local government actors within the Tenth Circuit can dispose of constitutional challenges to lawsuits by changing their enforcement policies during the pendency of litigation, giving them a legal power under federal law that other state and local governments do not possess.

B. The Courts of Appeals are divided on the appropriate standard of review applicable to the voluntary cessation doctrine.

1. Compounding the circuit split, the courts of appeals are also divided on the applicable standard of review concerning the voluntary cessation doctrine. Under the law of the Second, Seventh, Eleventh, and D.C. Circuits, a district court's underlying factual findings related to its adjudication of the voluntary cessation doctrine are reviewed for clear error or some form of abuse of discretion. By contrast, the panel decision of the Tenth Circuit reviewed them *de novo*. A dissenting opinion of the Tenth Circuit in a prior case has expressly acknowledged this deviation from its sister circuits.

a. In *True the Vote*, ___ F.3d ___, Nos. 14-5316, 15-5013, 2016 U.S. App. LEXIS 14375 (D.C. Cir. Aug. 5, 2016), the D.C. Circuit explained that it applies a

clear-error standard when reviewing the underlying factual determinations of a district court related to its adjudication of a voluntary cessation claim: “[A] dismissal under Rule 12(b)(1), unlike a dismissal under Rule 12(b)(6), is not reviewed de novo in its entirety, but only as to legal conclusions. Where, as here, the jurisdictional question before the court is fact-dependent, the first step of the review is a clear-error review regarding the factual decision of the district court.” *Id.* at *23. The court noted that it applies the same clear-error standard regardless of whether the evidence in question is documentary or testimonial in nature. *Id.*

b. In *Harrison & Burrowes Bridge Constructors, Inc. v. Cuomo*, 981 F.2d 50 (2nd Cir. 1992), the Second Circuit explained that it reviews a district court’s mootness determinations for abuse of discretion. *Id.* at 59 (“[a]lthough defendant bears a heavy burden when it seeks to have a case dismissed as moot, whether it should be dismissed or not lies within the sound discretion of the district court, and a strong showing of abuse must be made to reverse it.”) (citation and quotation omitted).

c. In *Pensacola Motor Sales Inc. v. Eastern Shore Toyota, LLC*, 684 F.3d 1211 (11th Cir. 2012), the Eleventh Circuit also observed that it reviews voluntary cessation determinations for abuse of discretion. *Id.* at 1220 (“a strong showing of abuse must be made to reverse a district court’s decision to issue an injunction for voluntary cessation.”) (citation and quotation omitted).

d. In *Kikimura v. Turner*, 28 F.3d 592 (7th Cir. 1994), the Seventh Circuit similarly observed that “[d]etermining whether an official’s voluntary cessation from engaging in conduct challenged as unconstitutional renders a case moot calls for an exercise of judicial discretion.” *Id.* at 597.

e. By contrast, the Tenth Circuit panel reviewed both the legal and factual conclusions of the district court de novo. App. 32 (“We have addressed the standard of review for mootness based on voluntary cessation. . . . We referred to this assessment as a ‘factual inquir[y]’ and said ‘[o]ur review of this question is de novo.’”) (quoting *Rio Grande Silvery Minnow v. Bureau of Reclamation*, 601 F.3d 1096, 1122 (10th Cir. 2010)). Operating under this de novo standard, the panel decision below disregarded the district court’s conclusion that the government had adopted its updated prosecution policy during the pendency of litigation as a strategic attempt to displace the court of its jurisdiction to hear the case, App. 53-57, finding instead that Respondent’s 2012 announcement of a new prosecution policy was “credible.” App. 55. The panel opinion also engaged in independent fact finding, conducting a sua sponte review of the documentary evidence and concluding—contrary to the findings of the district court—that the Petitioners’ decision to move to Nevada to avoid prosecution had ameliorated the threat of their prosecution for purposes of the cessation doctrine. Compare App. 41-45 with 850 F. Supp. 2d at 1244 (district court’s finding that Petitioners “fled from Utah to

Nevada for fear that they would be criminally prosecuted” and that “[o]nce the threat of prosecution is lifted, however, they expect to relocate to the State of Utah.”) and 1254 (Petitioners “felt compelled to move to Nevada in order to freely continue their participation in the television program. . . . It is clear that the Browns would like to return to Utah.” (citations omitted).

The panel’s factual conclusions directly supplanted those of the district court, which after two years of proceedings had found:

the timing of the policy implementation, lack of any public notice, and lack of reasoning given for adopting the policy suggest that the policy was implemented, not to provide a remedy to Plaintiffs in this case, but instead to evade review of Plaintiffs’ claims on the merits. Moreover, the policy implemented by Mr. Buhman does not provide Plaintiffs with all the relief they are seeking. It has already been established that the policy at issue is insufficient to alleviate the risk that Plaintiffs will be prosecuted or threatened with prosecution for their violation of Utah’s antibigamy statute in the future.

App. 78.

f. Even within the Tenth Circuit, the use of a *de novo* standard of review to evaluate voluntary cessation cases has evoked disagreement, as evidenced by a dissenting opinion in another leading case. See *Rio Grande Silvery Minnow v. Bureau of Reclamation*, 601

F.3d 1096, 1134-35 (10th Cir. 2010) (HENRY, J., dissenting) (“ . . . I disagree with the majority that we must engage in de novo review of the district court’s application of the voluntary cessation exception to mootness. . . . This fact-based, case-specific, multi-part inquiry plays to the strengths of the district court, particularly when, as here, that court had a first-hand opportunity to assess these factors over years of litigation. We should give due regard to the district court’s ‘feel for the case that we could not match without an inordinate expenditure of time.’”) (quoting *Cook v. City of Chicago*, 192 F.3d 693, 697 (7th Cir. 1999)); see also *id.* at 1135 (noting other circuits’ use of an abuse of discretion standard).

Because the Tenth Circuit’s judgment below represents a departure from its sister circuits on both the applicable test and the applicable standard of the voluntary cessation doctrine, this Court’s review is warranted to address the resulting discrepancy in federal law.

II. The Questions Presented Implicate a Recurring Issue of National Importance, and This Case Presents a Highly Suitable Vehicle for Resolving Them.

1. The controversy over the proper doctrinal test and standard of review applicable to this Court’s voluntary cessation doctrine is a recurring issue of national importance. As noted above, the Tenth Circuit panel decision’s approach to voluntary cessation

presently contradicts that of five other circuits. Accordingly, a government defendant's power to moot a constitutional challenge by announcing a new prosecution policy depends entirely upon the jurisdiction in which suit was filed. State and local government actors within the Tenth Circuit can dispose of constitutional challenges to lawsuits by changing their enforcement policies during the pendency of litigation, giving them a legal power under federal law that other state and local governments do not possess.

2. The panel decision also creates a chilling effect for parties seeking judicial recourse against unconstitutional laws and actions. In this case, for example, it allowed prosecutors to specifically target and publicly threaten a family with prosecution for their consensual private relationships, resulting in professional and social injuries that motivated them to relocate across the state border to escape such harassment. Yet the panel decision allows such claims to be extinguished overnight via the issuance of a new discretionary prosecution policy via executive order. To use the mootness doctrine to extinguish such constitutional claims is to decouple the doctrine from its original purposes. The issue is particularly acute in this case, where core First Amendment and sexual privacy rights are at stake, and the government continues to maintain that the law is both constitutional and necessary for future investigations.

3. In addition to Petitioners' ongoing fear of prosecution under a statute specifically used to threaten them, the panel also disregarded the ongoing injury

that they continue to experience in being classified as criminals. In a series of unchallenged declarations submitted to the district court, the Browns and their managers detailed how the government's public classification of their family as a criminal association affects virtually every aspect of their lives, from relocating across the border to seeking employment to dealing with schools (none of which appear to have been considered by the Tenth Circuit in its *de novo* setting aside of the district court's factual findings). Indeed, the government continues to defend the constitutionality of the statute, retaining it as a tool to conduct investigations and searches of cohabitating plural families at will, and causing such families to live under the continuing stigma of being classified as felons. Mr. Buhman and his colleagues appear to value the law precisely because it can be used pre-prosecution for investigations and corresponding searches, which may only last hours or days. However, plural families and cohabitating adults must live under the constant threat of being subject to a different and easier threshold for searches since their very family structure is all that is needed to justify investigations. Cf. *Virginia v. Am. Booksellers Ass'n, Inc.*, 484 U.S. 383 (1988) ("the alleged danger of this statute is, in large measure, one of self-censorship; a harm that can be realized even without an actual prosecution."); *Obergefell v. Hodges*, 135 S. Ct. 2584, 2593 (2015) ("The Constitution promises liberty to all within its reach, a liberty that includes certain specific rights that allow persons, within a lawful realm, to define and express their identity.")

4. This case also presents a highly suitable vehicle for resolving the questions presented. The court below held that even a discretionary change in prosecution policy was sufficient to moot a legal challenge to a criminal statute by persons formerly threatened with prosecution under it. If this Court were to reject the Tenth Circuit's approach and instead adopt the position of the D.C., Second, Third, Ninth, and Eleventh Circuits requiring an act of voluntary cessation to be "complete[]" and "irrevocabl[e]," the decision below would necessarily be reversed. Similarly, the court below held that all district court conclusions related to voluntary cessation should be reviewed de novo. If this Court were to reject that approach and instead adopt the abuse-of-discretion or clear-error approaches of the D.C., Second, Seventh, and Eleventh Circuits, the decision below would also necessarily be reversed.

This case therefore squarely presents the questions presented concerning the proper test and standard of review applicable to this Court's voluntary cessation doctrine.

III. The Tenth Circuit's Decision Misconstrues This Court's Precedents.

In addition to deepening an existing conflict among the courts of appeals, the decision below misconstrues at least two of this Court's decisions in *Laidlaw*, 528 U.S. 167, and *Davis*, 440 U.S. 625, as well as the pleadings standards required for collection of

money damages under the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure as elucidated by this Court.

1. While this Court has instructed in *Laidlaw* that “a defendant claiming that its voluntary compliance moots a case bears the formidable burden of showing that it is *absolutely clear* the allegedly wrongful behavior could not reasonably be expected to recur,” *id.* at 190 (emphasis added) (citing *United States v. Concentrated Phosphate Exp. Ass’n*, 393 U.S. 199, 203 (1968)), the Tenth Circuit’s decision minimized this language, concluding in a footnote that “the word ‘absolutely’ adds little to this formulation,” App. 29-30, n.16, and observing that, at least within the Tenth Circuit, this “heavy burden frequently has not prevented governmental officials from discontinuing challenged practices and mooting a case.” App. 31 (citing *Rio Grande Silvery Minnow*, 601 F.3d at 1116). Only by misconstruing this Court’s description of the “formable burden” imposed by the doctrine was the Tenth Circuit able to conclude that a discretionary change in prosecution policy – one that leaves undisturbed the very statute under which Petitioners were threatened – was sufficient to moot Petitioners’ lawsuit.

The panel decision also mistakenly disregards the continued validity of this Court’s 1979 decision in *Davis*, which elucidated a test for voluntary cessation that requires in part that the “interim relief or events have *completely and irrevocably* eradicated the effects of the alleged violation.” 440 U.S. at 631. While most of the courts of appeals continue to faithfully follow the test, see *supra* at 9-13, the Tenth and Seventh Circuits have

moved away from it, instead adopting a more permissive rule that regularly permits government actors to moot lawsuits by voluntary cessation doctrine by offering little more than discretionary, non-binding, and freely revocable changes in executive policy. See *supra* at 13-14.

2. As an independent and discrete matter, the panel decision also erred in a separate conclusion that the Browns' complaint had not adequately pleaded a case for money damages, and had thus sued only for injunctive relief. This conclusion directly conflicts with the standards set out by this Court and the notice-pleading standard of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. See Fed. R. Civ. P. 8(a)(1). The lower court found that Petitioners "unambiguously asserted a number of specific injuries in their Complaint that entitle them to monetary damages," App. 61, describing the government's arguments to the contrary as "creative" but "not persuasive." *Id.* In assessing the adequacy of a complaint, the court is required to draw "reasonable inference[s]" from all the facts alleged. *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009). The court does not require "hyper-technical, code-pleading." *Id.* Indeed, a court reviews the entirety of the complaint and "draw[s] on its judicial experience and common sense" to determine the claims and the requested relief. *Id.* at 679. Instead of focusing on the complaint as a whole, as required by *Iqbal* and *Frazier*, the panel focused solely on whether the Browns' prayer for relief at the conclusion of their complaint included a specific request for damages. App. 36-37, n.19. Such a hyper-technical and narrow

reading of the complaint is inconsistent with this Court's precedent. See *Holt Civic Club v. City of Tuscaloosa*, 439 U.S. 60, 66 (1978) (holding that "omissions" in a prayer for relief "are not in and of themselves a barrier to redress of a meritorious claim.").

Finally, the circuit court's determination that the Browns could not have sued Mr. Buhman for money damages is similarly flawed. The panel held that claims for money damages against municipal officials (as opposed to state officials) may only be brought if the plaintiff alleges that the official "executed a policy or custom" and "the Browns did not allege or attempt to prove . . . that Mr. Buhman acted in accordance with a Utah County policy or custom." App. 19, n.10. That is facially incorrect. A court is expected to read a complaint with both common sense and reasonable inferences drawn from the entirety of the complaint. The Browns sufficiently alleged that the custom, practices, and policy of county officials caused them to suffer deprivation of their constitutional rights. It is not necessary to use the word "policy" when the complaint describes the practices and policies of Mr. Buhman. The panel's decision conflicts with the notice pleading standard of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and related cases.

Accordingly, this Court's review is additionally warranted to correct these errors.



CONCLUSION

The petition for a writ of certiorari should be granted.

Respectfully submitted,

JONATHAN TURLEY
(*Counsel of Record*)
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON
UNIVERSITY LAW SCHOOL
2000 H St., N.W.
Washington, DC 20052
(202) 994-7001
jturley@law.gwu.edu

THOMAS M. HUFF
Attorney-at-Law
P.O. Box 2248
Leesburg, VA 20175
thuff@law.gwu.edu

September 12, 2016

PUBLISH

**UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE TENTH CIRCUIT**

KODY BROWN; MERI BROWN;
JANELLE BROWN; CHRISTINE
BROWN; ROBYN SULLIVAN,

Plaintiffs-Appellees,

v.

JEFFREY R. BUHMAN,

Defendant-Appellant.

14-4117

EAGLE FORUM EDUCATION
& LEGAL DEFENSE FUND;
SOUND CHOICES COALITION,
INC.; CATO INSTITUTE,

Amici Curiae.

**APPEAL FROM THE
UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF UTAH
(D.C. No. 2:11-CV-00652-CW)**

(Filed Apr. 11, 2016)

Parker Douglas, Utah Federal Solicitor, Utah Attorney General's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah, appearing for Appellant.

Jonathan Turley, George Washington University School of Law, Washington, DC (Adam Alba, Magleby & Greenwood, Salt Lake City, Utah, with him on the briefs), appearing for Appellees.

Eugene Volokh, UCLA School of Law, Scott & Cyan Banister First Amendment Clinic, Los Angeles, California, and Ilya Shapiro, Cato Institute, Washington, DC, filed an amicus brief for Cato Institute.

Lawrence John Joseph, Law Office of Lawrence J. Joseph, Washington, DC, filed an amicus curiae brief for Eagle Forum Education & Legal Defense Fund.

Christian A. Kesselring, Wasatch Law Group, Heber City, Utah, filed an amicus curiae brief for Sound Choices Coalition, Inc.

Before **MATHESON**, **BALDOCK**, and **MORITZ**, Circuit Judges.

MATHESON, Circuit Judge

I. INTRODUCTION

This case concerns a constitutional challenge to Utah’s bigamy statute, Utah Code Annotated § 76-7-101 (“the Statute”), which provides:

- (1) A person is guilty of bigamy when, knowing he has a husband or wife or knowing the other person has a husband or wife, the person purports to marry another person or cohabits with another person.
- (2) Bigamy is a felony of the third degree.
- (3) It shall be a defense to bigamy that the accused reasonably believed he and the other person were legally eligible to remarry.

Exercising jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 1291, we hold this matter is moot. It is not a “Case” or “Controversy” under Article III of the U.S. Constitution. We remand to the district court with instructions to vacate the judgment and dismiss this action.

Kody Brown, Meri Brown, Janelle Brown, Christine Brown, and Robyn Sullivan (“the Browns”) form a “plural family.” Kody Brown is legally married to Meri Brown and “spiritually married” to the other three women, whom he calls “sister wives.” When the family became the subject of a TLC reality television show in 2010, the Lehi Police Department opened an investigation of the Browns for violating the Statute. The Browns then filed a 42 U.S.C. § 1983 action in federal district court against the Governor and Attorney General of the State of Utah and the Utah County Attorney. Claiming the Statute infringed their First and

Fourteenth Amendment rights, the Browns sought declaratory relief and a permanent injunction enjoining enforcement of the Statute against them.

The district court dismissed the Governor and Attorney General. The Utah County Attorney's Office ("UCAO") subsequently closed its file on the Browns and adopted a policy ("the UCAO Policy") under which the Utah County Attorney will bring bigamy prosecutions only against those who (1) induce a partner to marry through misrepresentation or (2) are suspected of committing a collateral crime such as fraud or abuse. The Browns fall into neither category. Nonetheless, the district court denied the Utah County Attorney's motion to dismiss the case as moot and instead granted summary judgment to the Browns.

The district court erred by proceeding to the merits. Federal courts are courts of limited jurisdiction. They lack power to decide issues – however important or fiercely contested – that are detached from a live dispute between the parties. Following adoption of the UCAO Policy, the Browns' suit ceased to qualify as an Article III case or controversy. Their suit was moot before the district court awarded them relief, and the court therefore lacked jurisdiction to decide the Browns' claims.

II. BACKGROUND

A. *Factual Background*

Kody Brown, a former resident of Lehi, Utah, is legally married to Meri Brown. He is also "spiritually

married” – but not legally married – to Janelle Brown, Christine Brown, and Robyn Sullivan, who “consider themselves committed to him as ‘sister wives.’” App., Vol. 1 at 23, 37.¹ Together, the Browns form a “plural family.” *Id.* at 36.

The Browns belong to the Apostolic United Brethren Church (“AUB”), which views polygamy as “a core religious practice.” App., Vol. 3 at 564.² Consistent with AUB teaching, they “believe that only through celestial marriage can they ensure the salvation of their souls following death.” App., Vol. 1 at 36.

In September 2010, TLC began airing “Sister Wives,” a reality television show featuring the Browns that “explores the daily issues and realities of a plural family.” App., Vol. 3 at 565. On the show, the Browns have discussed their religious belief in polygamy and defended their polygamist lifestyle.

Viewers of the show contacted the Lehi Police Department to “inquir[e] what the department intended to do” about the Browns. App., Vol. 2 at 246. The day

¹ It is unclear from the record exactly what the Browns mean by “spiritual marriage.” According to the complaint, “Kody Brown considered himself committed to his Co-Plaintiffs as head of the plural family, a position imposing on him the duty to raise and father children with each of his spiritual wives.” App., Vol. 1 at 37.

² The Statute refers to “bigamy” rather than “polygamy,” Utah Code Ann. § 76-7-101(1), although liability extends to defendants with more than two spouses, *see, e.g., State v. Green*, 99 P.3d 820, 822 (Utah 2004). For purposes of this opinion, the difference between bigamy and polygamy is immaterial. We therefore use the terms interchangeably.

after the first episode aired, the Department publicly announced it was investigating the Browns for violations of the Statute.

In October 2010, the Lehi Police Department forwarded the results of its investigation to the UCAO. Following standard practice, the UCAO opened a case file on the Browns. Fearful they would be criminally prosecuted, the Browns moved to Nevada in January 2011. Mr. Buhman was quoted in a January 2011 media report as saying that despite the Browns' move, his office would not rule out the possibility of prosecution.

B. Procedural Background

1. The Browns' Complaint

On July 13, 2011, before the UCAO had completed its investigation, the Browns filed suit in the U.S. District Court for the District of Utah. Their complaint named Jeffrey Buhman, County Attorney for Utah County; Gary Herbert, Governor of the State of Utah; and Mark Shurtleff, Attorney General of the State of Utah (collectively, "Defendants"), all in their official capacities.

The Browns alleged the Statute violates (1) their substantive due process right "to freely make personal decisions relating to procreation, contraception, family relationships, and child rearing," both on its face and as applied, and the due process right not to be subject to vague criminal laws, App., Vol. 1 at 47; (2) the Equal Protection Clause, both on its face and as applied,

because it treats religiously motivated polygamists differently from other people; (3) their right to the free exercise of religion, both on its face and as applied; (4) their free speech rights because prosecutors used the Statute to single them out based on their public statements endorsing polygamy; (5) their freedom of association, both on its face and as applied, because its application has deprived the Browns of “the right to associate with other like-minded citizens who believe that consenting adults should be able to maintain private relations and unions without interference from the state,” *id.* at 52; and (6) the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. In their seventh and final cause of action, the Browns asserted Defendants were “in violation of 42 U.S.C. § 1983” because they had deprived the Browns of their constitutional rights while acting under color of state law. *Id.* at 53.

The Browns’ prayer for relief requested (1) a “declar[ation] that [the Statute] violates the Due Process and Equal Protection Clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment, the Free Exercise, Establishment, Free Speech, and Freedom of Association Clauses of the First Amendment, and 42 U.S.C. § 1983”; (2) a “preliminary and permanent injunction enjoining enforcement or application of [the Statute] against the Brown family”; (3) an award of “reasonable attorneys’ fees and costs incurred in maintaining this action”; and (4) “such other relief as [the district court] may deem just and proper.” *Id.* at 54.

In asserting the district court’s jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 1343(a)(4), the complaint explained that

“this action seeks equitable relief under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, an Act of Congress.” *Id.* at 19. Additionally, the complaint’s “Nature of the Action” section provides, “Through this action, pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983, the Brown family seeks a declaration that [the Statute] is unconstitutional. . . . The Browns further seek a preliminary and permanent injunction preventing the Defendants from enforcing the [Statute] against the Browns.” *Id.* at 19-20. The complaint expressly disclaimed any request for a declaration that the Statute and the Utah Constitution “are unconstitutional to the extent that they merely prohibit the official recognition of polygamous marriage or the acquisition of multiple state marriage licenses.” *Id.* at 20. Finally, the complaint did not request money damages.

2. Defendants’ Motions to Dismiss

Defendants filed two separate motions to dismiss in district court. One was granted in part; the other was denied.

a. *Defendants’ Motion to Dismiss for Lack of Standing*

On September 2, 2011, Defendants filed a motion to dismiss, arguing the Browns lacked standing to press their claims.

Attached to that motion was a declaration signed by Mr. Shurtleff,³ in which he declared his office had a “policy . . . not to prosecute polygamists under Utah’s criminal bigamy statute for just the sake of their practicing polygamy” (“the AG Policy”). *Id.* at 77. Under the AG Policy, Mr. Shurtleff’s office initiates prosecutions under the Statute only against someone who also “commit[s] child or spouse abuse, domestic violence, welfare fraud, or any other crime.” *Id.* He said his “predecessors in recent memory” had followed the AG Policy, and he was unaware of cases brought “against a polygamist just for violating the bigamy law in the last fifty years unless it is in conjunction with another crime.” *Id.* at 78. In addition, Mr. Shurtleff attested “[i]t [wa]s not the intent of the Utah Attorney General’s Office to prosecute the Browns for their practice of polygamy while they were living in Lehi, Utah, unless it [wa]s found that they were also committing some other crime worthy of prosecution.” *Id.* at 79.

Defendants also attached a declaration from Mr. Buhman signed under penalty of perjury. Although theUCAO “d[id] not have a formal, declared policy regarding prosecution of polygamy,” he said no one on his staff “ha[d] any recollection of [theUCAO] having ever prosecuted anyone for polygamy.” *Id.* at 74. He added, however, that he had “not stated publically that [he]

³ 28 U.S.C. § 1746(2) provides for a declaration subscribed to “under penalty of perjury” to have the same “force and effect” as a “sworn declaration, verification, certificate, statement, oath, or affidavit.” The declarations filed by Mr. Shurtleff and Mr. Buhman in this case were subscribed to “under penalty of perjury.”

w[ould] or w[ould] not prosecute the Browns.” *Id.* Mr. Buhman also declared that the UCAO “has on occasion prosecuted a bigamy case for marriage fraud or for a failure to get divorced before remarrying.” *Id.* at 75. “Were the Browns committing other crimes, such as spousal or child abuse, welfare fraud or the like,” he stated, “the chance of prosecution would be likely.” *Id.*

Defendants argued the Browns lacked standing because the AG Policy and the UCAO’s non-enforcement of the Statute made prosecution unlikely.

On December 19, 2011, Defendants supplemented the record with a declaration from Amanda Jex, a law clerk in the Attorney General’s Office who had been “assigned the task of researching prosecution of polygamists in Utah subsequent to their public appearances.” *Id.* at 176. She had asked the Administrative Office of the Courts for the State of Utah to provide a list of cases brought under the Statute in the preceding ten years. The Administrative Office responded with a list of ten defendants prosecuted under the Statute between 2001 and 2011. The list did not indicate whether defendants charged under the Statute were also charged with collateral crimes.

To determine whether those ten defendants had also been charged with collateral crimes, Ms. Jex ran “internet queries through Google.com, and Utah based news agencies such as: KSL.com, the Salt Lake Tribune, the Deseret News and The Spectrum.” *Id.* She also conducted research on Court XChange, an online database operated by the Utah courts. Her declaration does

not indicate whether she checked actual court dockets or records or contacted court clerk's offices for information. There is no evidence in the record regarding prosecutions before 2001.

Of the ten cases Ms. Jex identified in her declaration, six – including two in Utah County – involved defendants who were also prosecuted for crimes other than bigamy, such as criminal non-support, unlawful sexual conduct with a minor, forcible sex abuse, marriage license fraud, and insurance fraud. Ms. Jex's "internet queries" did not reveal additional charges in the four remaining cases, one of which involved a defendant charged in Utah County in 2010. But prosecutors dismissed the charges in three of those cases, including the Utah County case. The final defendant was found guilty in Weber County of "[a]tttempted bigamy." App., Vol. 1 at 179.

On February 3, 2012, the district court dismissed Governor Herbert and Attorney General Shurtleff, concluding, based on the latter's declaration, that "nothing suggest[s] that the State of Utah has taken any action towards [the Browns] that could be interpreted as threatening prosecution." *Brown v. Herbert*, 850 F. Supp. 2d 1240, 1249 (D. Utah 2012). But the court denied dismissal of Mr. Buhman. *Id.* at 1244. Noting the UCAO's lack of an official prosecution policy, the court said, "Mr. Buhman ha[d] submitted nothing to the court that either counters [the Browns'] account of the events, or otherwise suggests that the prosecutorial door is not wide open." *Id.* at 1251. The Browns faced "a credible threat of prosecution," the court

concluded, and therefore had standing to bring their claims. *Id.* at 1252.

b. *Mr. Buhman's Motion to Dismiss for Mootness*

Four months later, on May 31, 2012, Mr. Buhman filed a motion to dismiss the Browns' suit as constitutionally moot. The motion was based on a second declaration Mr. Buhman had signed on May 22, 2012, in which he announced he had "now adopted a formal office policy" regarding polygamy prosecutions – theUCAO Policy. App., Vol. 2 at 329. TheUCAO Policy, which essentially adopts the AG Policy, provides:

Prosecution of Bigamy Crimes:

The Utah County Attorney's Office will prosecute the crime of bigamy under [the Statute] in two circumstances: (1) When a victim is induced to marry through their partner's fraud, misrepresentation or omissions; or (2) When a person purports to marry or cohabits with another person in violation of [the Statute] and is also engaged in some type of abuse, violence or fraud. This office will prosecute the crime of child bigamy under Section 76-7-101.5 regardless of whether one of the parties is also engaged in some type of abuse, violence or fraud.

Id. According to Mr. Buhman's declaration, theUCAO Policy was "intended . . . to prevent the future prosecution in Utah County of bigamous marriages entered into for religious reasons." *Id.*

Mr. Buhman also attested that theUCAO “ha[d] concluded its investigation of the Browns and ha[d] determined that no other prosecutable crimes related to the bigamy allegation have been or are being committed by the Browns in Utah County as of the date of this declaration.” *Id.* As a result, he wrote, “the criminal case against the Browns is closed and no charges will be filed against them for bigamy unless new evidence is discovered which would comport with the [UCAO Policy] pertaining to the prosecution of bigamy crimes.” *Id.* at 330. The district court concluded in its subsequent summary judgment order and memorandum that it was undisputed Mr. Buhman had “found no evidence of any crime by the Browns.” App., Vol. 3 at 566.

On August 17, 2012, the district court denied Mr. Buhman’s motion. It reasoned that the “timing of Mr. Buhman’s adoption of the [UCAO Policy]” – 18 months after “Sister Wives” began airing and four months after the initial motion to dismiss was denied – suggested a “strategic attempt to use the mootness doctrine to evade review.” App., Vol. 2 at 493. The court also noted that theUCAO Policy “does not reject the ability of Utah County to prosecute under the anti-bigamy statute” and “reflects, at most, an exercise of prosecutorial discretion.” *Id.* at 494. Accordingly, the court denied the Browns’ case was constitutionally moot because it could not “conclude that there is no reasonable expectation that [the Browns] would be prosecuted under the statute in the future.” *Id.* at 496.

Taking up the question of prudential mootness *sua sponte*, the district court concluded similar considerations counseled against dismissing the case on that basis.⁴ The district court wrote that “the timing of the [UCAO Policy] implementation, lack of any public notice, and lack of reasoning given for adopting the [UCAO Policy] suggest that the [UCAO Policy] was implemented, not to provide a remedy to [the Browns] in this case, but instead to evade review of [the Browns’] claims on the merits.” *Id.* at 498.

3. Cross-Motions for Summary Judgment

On May 31, 2012, the Browns filed a motion for summary judgment on all claims. Mr. Buhman filed a cross-motion for summary judgment.

On December 13, 2013, the district court entered a lengthy order granting the Browns’ motion for summary judgment and denying Mr. Buhman’s cross-motion. *Brown v. Buhman*, 947 F. Supp. 2d 1170, 1176 (D. Utah 2013). That order first addressed the Statute’s “cohabitation prong,” which imposes criminal liability on a person who, “knowing he has a husband or

⁴ “Courts recognize two kinds of mootness: constitutional mootness and prudential mootness.” *Jordan v. Sosa*, 654 F.3d 1012, 1023 (10th Cir. 2011) (brackets and quotation omitted). “Even if a case is not constitutionally moot, a court may dismiss a case under the prudential-mootness doctrine if the case is so attenuated that considerations of prudence and comity for coordinate branches of government counsel the court to stay its hand, and to withhold relief it has the *power* to grant.” *Id.* at 1024 (emphasis in original) (brackets and quotations omitted).

wife or knowing the other person has a husband or wife, . . . cohabits with another person.” Utah Code Ann. § 76-7-101(1). The court held this portion of the Statute violated the First Amendment’s Free Exercise Clause, lacked a rational basis under the Fourteenth Amendment Due Process clause, and was void for vagueness. *Id.* at 1176, 1226. In addition, the court concluded the Browns’ remaining claims – those based on freedom of association, freedom of speech, equal protection, and the Establishment Clause – were at least “colorable,” entitling the Browns to relief under the “hybrid rights” theory of religious free exercise. *Id.* at 1222.⁵ The court therefore determined the cohabitation prong had to be “stricken” from the Statute. *Id.*

Having struck the cohabitation prong, the court turned to the Statute’s “purports to marry” prong, which states, “A person is guilty of bigamy when, knowing he has a husband or wife or knowing the other person has a husband or wife, the person purports to marry another person.” Utah Code Ann. § 76-7-101(1).

⁵ Neutral, generally applicable laws that incidentally burden religious free exercise will ordinarily survive constitutional challenge as long as they are rationally related to a legitimate government interest. *Grace United Methodist Church v. City of Cheyenne*, 451 F.3d 643, 649 (10th Cir. 2006). But under the hybrid rights doctrine, “a party c[an] establish a violation of the free exercise clause even in the case of a neutral law of general applicability by showing that the challenged governmental action compromised both the right to free exercise of religion and an independent constitutional right.” *Id.* at 655. The “hybrid-rights theory at least requires a colorable showing of infringement of a companion constitutional right.” *Axson-Flynn v. Johnson*, 356 F.3d 1277, 1295 (10th Cir. 2004) (quotation omitted).

The Utah Supreme Court had previously held that under this portion of the Statute, liability attaches when a couple hold themselves out as married, even if they do not profess to be *legally* married. *State v. Holm*, 137 P.3d 726, 732 (Utah 2006). The district court acknowledged *Holm*'s holding but concluded that “[u]nder this broad interpretation of the term ‘marry,’ the phrase ‘purports to marry another person’ raises the same constitutional concerns addressed in relation to the cohabitation prong.” *Brown*, 947 F. Supp. 2d at 1192, 1226. It therefore adopted a “narrowing construction” that interprets “purports to marry” as “referring to an individual’s claim of entry into a legal union recognized by the state as marriage.” *Id.* at 1231 (quoting *Holm*, 137 P.3d at 763 (Durham, C.J., concurring in part and dissenting in part)).⁶ The court held that, as construed – with the cohabitation prong

⁶ The court did not explain where it derived the authority to construe a state statute differently from how the state’s highest court had construed it. See *Johnson v. United States*, 559 U.S. 133, 138 (2010) (“We are, however, bound by the Florida Supreme Court’s interpretation of state law, including its determination of the elements of Fla. Stat. § 784.03(2).”); *Schrock v. Wyeth, Inc.*, 727 F.3d 1273, 1280 (10th Cir. 2013) (“It is axiomatic that state courts are the final arbiters of state law.” (quotation omitted)). Even if adopting an alternative construction might avert possible constitutional problems, federal courts must defer to states’ interpretations of their own statutes. See *Am. Constitutional Law Found., Inc. v. Meyer*, 120 F.3d 1092, 1106 (10th Cir. 1997) (instructing, in void-for-vagueness case, that “[w]e must read the statute as it has been interpreted by Colorado’s highest court”); *United States v. Gaudreau*, 860 F.2d 357, 361 (10th Cir. 1988) (“[A] federal court evaluating a vagueness challenge to a state law must read the statute as it is interpreted by the state’s highest court.” (citing *Wainwright v. Stone*, 414 U.S. 21, 22-23 (1973))).

stricken and the “purport to marry” prong narrowed – the Statute survives constitutional scrutiny. *Id.* at 1233-34.

The district court entered judgment in favor of the Browns on December 17, 2013, but did not order injunctive relief.⁷

4. Proceedings on “the § 1983 Claim”

The district court vacated its judgment sua sponte on December 20, 2013, because it had not yet resolved “the status of the 42 U.S.C. 1983 claim.” Dist. Ct. Doc. 84. After ordering supplemental briefing, the district court, on August 27, 2014, held that Mr. Buhman had waived qualified immunity and prosecutorial immunity defenses by failing to plead them in his answer or argue them in the summary judgment briefing.⁸ The

⁷ Like the court’s December 13, 2013 order, the judgment announces that the Statute’s cohabitation prong “is stricken” and the “purports to marry” prong is “susceptible to a narrowing construction.” App., Vol. 3 at 651. Both documents grant the Browns’ summary judgment motion in part and deny Mr. Buhman’s cross-motion, but neither expressly enjoins Mr. Buhman from enforcing the Statute against the Browns. In practical effect, therefore, the district court granted the Browns only one of their requested forms of relief, namely a declaration that the Statute’s cohabitation prong violates the First and Fourteenth Amendments.

⁸ This holding was erroneous. Immunity defenses are not available – and therefore cannot be waived – in suits seeking relief against a public official only in his or her official capacity. *Cox v. Glanz*, 800 F.3d 1231, 1239 n.1 (10th Cir. 2015) (“The defense of qualified immunity is available only in suits against officials sued in their personal capacities, not in suits against . . . officials sued

court “therefore f[ound] in favor of [the Browns] on their seventh and final count in the Complaint under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 and [granted] summary judgment in their favor on this last remaining count.” App., Vol. 3 at 728.⁹ It construed the complaint to include a request for money damages but determined the Browns had

in their official capacities.” (quotation omitted) (ellipsis in original); *Lemmons v. Law Firm of Morris & Morris*, 39 F.3d 264, 267 (10th Cir. 1994) (“[N]either qualified *nor absolute* immunity precludes prospective *injunctive relief* except in rare circumstances not relevant here.” (emphasis in original)); *see also* Martin A. Schwartz, Section 1983 Litigation Claims and Defenses § 9.01[3] (3d ed. 2005) (“The common-law absolute and qualified immunities that have been recognized in § 1983 actions pertain to claims for monetary relief against state and local officials in their personal capacities. Neither the absolute nor qualified immunities extend to suits for injunctive or declaratory relief under § 1983.”) (footnote omitted).

⁹ The Browns and the district court misapprehended the relationship between § 1983 and the Defendants’ alleged constitutional violations. “Section 1983 itself does not create any substantive rights, but merely provides relief against those who, acting under color of law, violate federal rights created elsewhere.” *Reynolds v. Sch. Dist. No. 1, Denver, Colo.*, 69 F.3d 1523, 1536 (10th Cir. 1995). That is, § 1983 is a remedial vehicle for raising claims based on the violation of constitutional rights. There can be no “violation” of § 1983 separate and apart from the underlying constitutional violations. *See Sanchez v. Hartley*, 810 F.3d 750, 759 (10th Cir. 2016) (“Section 1983 merely provides a cause of action; the substantive rights are created elsewhere.”); *accord* Schwartz, *supra* note 8, § 1.05[B] (“Section 1983 fulfills the procedural or remedial role of authorizing the assertion of the claim for relief but does not itself create or establish substantive rights. Thus, one cannot go into court and claim a violation of § 1983 – for § 1983 by itself does not protect anyone against anything.” (quotations omitted)). Accordingly, the Browns’ first six claims could be brought only under § 1983, and claim seven is redundant of those claims.

“drop[ped]” this request in their supplemental briefing. *Id.* at 728.¹⁰ Accordingly, the court awarded the Browns

¹⁰ Our review of the complaint reveals no request for money damages. Nor could there be such a request, as the Browns sued Defendants in their official and not their individual capacities. With respect to state officials, such as Mr. Herbert and Mr. Shurtleff, “[s]ection 1983 plaintiffs may sue individual-capacity defendants only for money damages and official-capacity defendants only for injunctive relief.” *Brown v. Montoya*, 662 F.3d 1152, 1161 n.5 (10th Cir. 2011) (citing *Hafer v. Melo*, 502 U.S. 21, 30 (1991)); see also Richard H. Fallon, Jr. et al., *Hart and Wechsler’s The Federal Courts and the Federal System* 958 (6th ed. 2009) (“[D]amages actions pleaded against state officials in their ‘official capacity’ will ordinarily be dismissed as barred by the state’s sovereign immunity. . . . When *equitable relief* is sought, the defendant official is ordinarily named in an official capacity.” (emphasis in original)).

Assuming he is a municipal official, matters are more complicated as to Mr. Buhman. (If he is instead a state official, the Browns could not seek damages against him for the same reason they could not seek damages against Mr. Herbert and Mr. Shurtleff.)

“The Supreme Court has determined that an official-capacity suit brought under § 1983 generally represents only another way of pleading an action against an entity of which an officer is an agent, and as long as the government entity receives notice and an opportunity to respond, an official-capacity suit is, in all respects other than name, to be treated as a suit against the entity.” *Moss v. Kopp*, 559 F.3d 1155, 1168 n.13 (10th Cir. 2009) (quotations and brackets omitted). “To establish a claim for damages under § 1983 against municipal entities or local government bodies, the plaintiff must prove (1) the entity executed a policy or custom (2) that caused the plaintiff to suffer deprivation of constitutional or other federal rights.” *Id.* at 1168. Here, the Browns did not allege or attempt to prove in district court that Mr. Buhman acted in accordance with a Utah County policy or custom. Damages were therefore unavailable under § 1983. See Fallon, et al., *supra*, at 958-62 (explaining that “[d]amages actions against local government officers in their official capacities can go forward only

only “attorney’s fees, costs, and expenses incurred in this action under 42 U.S.C. § 1988,” *id.* at 730, which authorizes such fees and costs in § 1983 suits.

An amended final judgment was entered the same day.¹¹ Mr. Buhman filed a timely notice of appeal on September 24, 2014. *See* Fed. R.App. 4(a)(1)(A).

III. DISCUSSION

Mr. Buhman appeals the district court’s grant of summary judgment to the Browns. He argues the district court erred by (1) finding a free exercise violation despite controlling precedent holding polygamy bans do not offend the Free Exercise Clause, (2) concluding the Statute’s prohibition of “religious cohabitation” lacks a rational basis under the Due Process Clause, and (3) awarding relief on the Browns’ “hybrid rights” claims.

On December 11, 2015, we ordered the parties to submit supplemental briefing addressing (1) whether the Browns had standing at the time the complaint

[in] accordance with the rules governing local governmental liability described in” *Monell v. Department of Social Services*, 436 U.S. 658 (1978), which conditions liability on action taken under an official policy or a de facto custom).

¹¹ This judgment, like the first, does not enjoin enforcement of the Statute. It only announces the district court’s view that the cohabitation prong of the Statute is unconstitutional and the “purports to marry” prong can be saved only by adopting a narrowing construction.

was filed, and (2) if so, whether the UCAO Policy rendered the Browns' claims moot.

We do not address the merits of the Browns' claims. The district court should not have done so, either. Assuming the Browns had standing as to Mr. Buhman when they filed suit, they ceased to have standing when Mr. Buhman filed his May 2012 declaration, and this case therefore became moot.¹² The declaration rendered the threat of prosecution so speculative that a live controversy no longer existed for Article III jurisdiction. We therefore remand to the district court with directions to vacate the judgment and dismiss this case.

A. *Standing and Mootness*

The U.S. Constitution delegates certain powers to each branch of the federal government and places limits on those powers. Article III vests “[t]he judicial Power of the United States . . . in one supreme Court, and in such inferior Courts as the Congress may from time to time ordain and establish.” U.S. Const. art. III, § 1.

¹² “Mootness and standing are jurisdictional. Because there is no mandatory sequencing of nonmerits issues, we have leeway to choose among threshold grounds for denying audience to a case on the merits.” *Citizen Ctr. v. Gessler*, 770 F.3d 900, 906 (10th Cir. 2014) (quotations, citation, and brackets omitted). Accordingly, we may address mootness without deciding whether the Browns had standing.

Federal courts exercising this authority are “con-
fine[d] . . . to deciding actual ‘Cases’ or ‘Controver-
sies.’” *Hollingsworth v. Perry*, 133 S. Ct. 2652, 2661
(2013) (quoting U.S. Const. art. III, § 2). “In our system
of government, courts have no business deciding legal
disputes or expounding on law in the absence of such
a case or controversy.” *Already, LLC v. Nike, Inc.*, 133
S. Ct. 721, 726 (2013) (quotation omitted). “As used in
the Constitution, those words do not include every
sort of dispute, but only those historically viewed as
capable of resolution through the judicial process.”
Hollingsworth, 133 S. Ct. at 2659 (quotation omitted).

As the Supreme Court has explained, “no principle
is more fundamental to the judiciary’s proper role in
our system of government than the constitutional
limitation of federal-court jurisdiction to actual cases
or controversies.” *Clapper v. Amnesty Int’l, USA*, 133
S. Ct. 1138, 1146 (2013) (brackets omitted); *see also*
Summers v. Earth Island Inst., 555 U.S. 488, 492-93
(2009) (“This limitation is founded in concern about
the proper – and properly limited – role of the courts
in a democratic society.” (quotation omitted)). The nar-
row scope of Article III, “which is built on separation-
of-powers principles, serves to prevent the judicial
process from being used to usurp the powers of the
political branches.” *Susan B. Anthony List v. Driehaus*,
134 S. Ct. 2334, 2341 (2014); *see also Hollingsworth*,
133 S. Ct. at 2659 (“[The case-or-controversy require-
ment] is an essential limit on our power: It ensures

that we act *as judges*, and do not engage in policymaking properly left to elected representatives.” (emphasis in original)).

Two related doctrines, standing and mootness, keep federal courts within their constitutional bounds. Standing concerns whether a plaintiff’s action qualifies as a case or controversy when it is filed; mootness ensures it remains one at the time a court renders its decision.¹³ The Supreme Court has described mootness “as the doctrine of standing set in a time frame: The requisite personal interest that must exist at the commencement of the litigation (standing) must continue throughout its existence (mootness).” *Arizonans for Official English v. Arizona*, 520 U.S. 43, 68 n.22 (1997) (quotations omitted).¹⁴ Failure to satisfy the requirements of either doctrine places a dispute outside the

¹³ A third jurisdictional doctrine, known as ripeness, “aims to prevent courts from entangling themselves in abstract disagreements by avoiding premature adjudication.” *Cellport Sys., Inc. v. Peiker Acoustic GMBH & Co. KG*, 762 F.3d 1016, 1029 (10th Cir. 2014) (quotation omitted); see also *Abbott Labs. v. Gardner*, 387 U.S. 136, 148 (1967). “Even if all the relevant facts regarding a particular legal issue are known or knowable, a court does not have jurisdiction to resolve the issue unless that issue arises in a specific dispute having real-world consequences.” *Cellport Sys.*, 762 F.3d at 1029 (brackets and quotation omitted). “The doctrines of standing and ripeness originate from the same Article III limitation.” *Susan B. Anthony List*, 134 S. Ct. at 2341 n.5 (quotations omitted).

¹⁴ The Court has cautioned that the “time frame” description of mootness “is not comprehensive.” *Friends of the Earth, Inc. v. Laidlaw Env’tl. Serv’s (TOC), Inc.*, 528 U.S. 167, 190, 120 S.Ct. 693, 145 L.Ed.2d 610 (2000). In particular, “there are circumstances in which the prospect that a defendant will engage in (or resume)

reach of the federal courts. *See Already*, 133 S. Ct. at 726 (“We have repeatedly held that an actual controversy must exist not only at the time the complaint is filed, but through all stages of the litigation.” (quotation omitted)).

We discuss standing and mootness in turn.

1. Standing

Standing “requires federal courts to satisfy themselves that the plaintiff has alleged such a personal stake in the outcome of the controversy as to warrant *his* invocation of federal-court jurisdiction.” *Summers*, 555 U.S. at 493 (emphasis in original) (quotations omitted).

We measure standing as of the time the plaintiff files suit. *See Davis v. Fed. Election Comm’n*, 554 U.S. 724, 732-33 (2008). The burden is on the plaintiff to establish standing. *Summers*, 555 U.S. at 493; *see Bennett v. Spear*, 520 U.S. 154, 167-68 (1997) (“[E]ach element of Article III standing must be supported in the same way as any other matter on which the plaintiff bears the burden of proof, *i.e.*, with the manner and degree of

harmful conduct may be too speculative to support standing, but not too speculative to overcome mootness.” *Id.* Standing, unlike mootness, is also not subject to an exception for disputes that are “capable of repetition yet evading review,” which we discuss below. *Id.* at 191. These caveats, however, do not affect the general rule that “[t]he requisite personal interest that must exist at the commencement of the litigation (standing) must continue throughout its existence (mootness).” *Arizonans for Official English*, 520 U.S. at 68 n.22.

evidence required at the successive stages of the litigation.” (quotation omitted)).

“To establish Article III standing, a plaintiff must show (1) an ‘injury in fact,’ (2) a sufficient ‘causal connection between the injury and the conduct complained of,’ and (3) a ‘likelihood’ that the injury ‘will be redressed by a favorable decision.’” *Susan B. Anthony List*, 134 S. Ct. at 2341 (quoting *Lujan v. Defs. of Wildlife*, 504 U.S. 555, 560-61 (1992)) (brackets omitted). These three elements – “injury in fact,” “causation,” and “redressability” – “together constitute the irreducible constitutional minimum of standing.” *Vt. Agency of Nat. Res. v. United States ex rel. Stevens*, 529 U.S. 765, 771 (2000) (quotation omitted).

This case centers on the injury-in-fact requirement. “An injury sufficient to satisfy Article III must be concrete and particularized and actual or imminent, not conjectural or hypothetical. An allegation of future injury may suffice if the threatened injury is certainly impending, or there is a substantial risk that the harm will occur.” *Susan B. Anthony List*, 134 S. Ct. at 2341 (quotations omitted).

When a plaintiff alleges injury arising from the potential future enforcement of a criminal statute, “an actual arrest, prosecution, or other enforcement action is not a prerequisite to challenging the law.” *Id.* at 2342. Instead, “a plaintiff satisfies the injury-in-fact requirement where he alleges an intention to engage in a course of conduct arguably affected with a constitutional interest, but proscribed by a statute, and there

exists a credible threat of prosecution thereunder.” *Id.* (quotation omitted); see also *Mink v. Suthers*, 482 F.3d 1244, 1253 (10th Cir. 2007) (“[T]he mere presence on the statute books of an unconstitutional statute, in the absence of enforcement or credible threat of enforcement, does not entitle anyone to sue, even if they allege an inhibiting effect on constitutionally protected conduct prohibited by the statute.” (quotation omitted)). A credible threat is one that is “well-founded” and “not ‘imaginary or wholly speculative.’” *Susan B. Anthony List*, 134 S. Ct. at 2343 (quoting *Virginia v. Am. Booksellers Ass’n, Inc.*, 484 U.S. 383, 393 (1988), and *Babbitt v. Farm Workers*, 442 U.S. 289, 302 (1979)). “In other words, to satisfy Article III, the plaintiff’s expressive activities must be inhibited by an objectively justified fear of real consequences.” *Winsness v. Yocom*, 433 F.3d 727, 732 (10th Cir. 2006) (quotation omitted).

2. Mootness

a. General Principles

A plaintiff’s standing at the time of filing does not ensure the court will ultimately be able to decide the case on the merits. An “actual controversy must be extant at all stages of review, not merely at the time the complaint is filed.” *Genesis Healthcare Corp. v. Symczyk*, 133 S. Ct. 1523, 1528 (2013) (quotations and citations omitted). “If an intervening circumstance deprives the plaintiff of a personal stake in the outcome of the lawsuit, at any point during litigation, the action can no longer proceed and must be dismissed as moot.”

Campbell-Ewald Co. v. Gomez, 136 S. Ct. 663, 669 (2016) (quotation omitted). Mootness deprives federal courts of jurisdiction. *See Decker v. Nw. Env'tl. Def. Ctr.*, 133 S. Ct. 1326, 1336 (2013); *Schell v. OXY USA, Inc.*, 814 F.3d 1107, 1114 (10th Cir. 2016) (“If a case is moot, we have no subject-matter jurisdiction.”).¹⁵

A “suit becomes moot when the issues presented are no longer ‘live’ or the parties lack a legally cognizable interest in the outcome.” *Chafin v. Chafin*, 133 S. Ct. 1017, 1023 (2013) (quotation and comma omitted). “No matter how vehemently the parties continue to dispute the lawfulness of the conduct that precipitated the lawsuit, the case is moot if the dispute is no longer embedded in any actual controversy about the plaintiffs’ particular legal rights.” *Already*, 133 S. Ct. at 727 (quotation omitted). “The crucial question is whether granting a present determination of the issues offered will have some effect in the real world.” *Wyoming v. U.S. Dep’t of Agric.*, 414 F.3d 1207, 1212 (10th Cir. 2005). “Put another way, a case becomes moot when a plaintiff no longer suffers actual injury that can be redressed by a favorable judicial decision.” *Ind v. Colo. Dep’t of Corr.*, 801 F.3d 1209, 1213 (10th Cir. 2015) (quotations omitted).

¹⁵ Constitutional mootness is jurisdictional; prudential mootness is discretionary. *See Jordan*, 654 F.3d at 1024. Because we conclude the Browns’ claim is constitutionally moot, we do not address prudential mootness in this opinion.

b. *Exceptions*

Courts recognize two “exceptions” to the mootness doctrine – situations in which a case remains subject to federal court jurisdiction notwithstanding the seeming extinguishment of any live case or controversy.

One exception involves disputes that are “capable of repetition, yet evading review.” “The exception applies where (1) the challenged action is in its duration too short to be fully litigated prior to cessation or expiration, and (2) there is a reasonable expectation that the same complaining party will be subject to the same action again.” *Fed. Election Comm’n v. Wis. Right to Life, Inc.*, 551 U.S. 449, 462 (2007); *see also* Erwin Chemerinsky, *Federal Jurisdiction* 137 (6th ed. 2012) (explaining that this exception addresses instances where “injuries occur and are over so quickly that they always will be moot before the federal court litigation process is completed”). Disputes regarding regulation of abortion, for example, are capable of repetition yet evade review because “the normal 266-day human gestation period is so short that the pregnancy will come to term before the usual appellate process is complete. If that termination makes a case moot, pregnancy litigation seldom will survive much beyond the trial stage, and appellate review will be effectively denied.” *Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. 113, 125 (1973). Mooting this case would not run afoul of the “capable of repetition” exception because any renewed threat of prosecution would leave the Browns ample time and opportunity to challenge the Statute.

The second exception to mootness, relevant here, concerns “voluntary cessation” of the defendant’s conduct. *Already*, 133 S. Ct. at 727. Under this exception, “voluntary cessation of challenged conduct does not ordinarily render a case moot because a dismissal for mootness would permit a resumption of the challenged conduct as soon as the case is dismissed.” *Knox v. Serv. Emps. Int’l Union, Local 1000*, 132 S. Ct. 2277, 2287 (2012). This rule is designed to prevent gamesmanship. If voluntary cessation automatically mooted a case, “a defendant could engage in unlawful conduct, stop when sued to have the case declared moot, then pick up where he left off, repeating this cycle until he achieves all his unlawful ends.” *Already*, 133 S. Ct. at 727. The voluntary cessation rule “traces to the principle that a party should not be able to evade judicial review, or to defeat a judgment, by temporarily altering questionable behavior.” *City News & Novelty, Inc. v. City of Waukesha*, 531 U.S. 278, 284 n.1 (2001). Courts therefore view voluntary cessation “with a critical eye,” lest defendants manipulate jurisdiction to “insulate” their conduct from judicial review. *Knox*, 132 S. Ct. at 2287.

A defendant’s voluntary cessation may moot a case, however, if the defendant carries “the formidable burden of showing that it is absolutely clear the allegedly wrongful behavior could not reasonably be expected to recur.” *Already*, 133 S. Ct. at 727 (quotation omitted).¹⁶ The Supreme Court has described this

¹⁶ The Supreme Court’s voluntary cessation cases suggest the word “absolutely” adds little to this formulation. After reciting

burden as “heavy,” *Parents Involved in Cmty. Schs. v. Seattle Sch. Dist. No. 1*, 551 U.S. 701, 719 (2007), and “stringent,” *Friends of the Earth*, 528 U.S. at 189.¹⁷

this standard, the Court sometimes omits “absolutely” from its subsequent analysis, instead using the “reasonably be expected” language as shorthand. *See Already*, 133 S. Ct. at 727 (“Under our precedents, it was Nike’s burden to show that it ‘could not reasonably be expected’ to resume its enforcement efforts against Already.” (quotation omitted)); *id.* (“That is the question the voluntary cessation doctrine poses: Could the allegedly wrongful behavior reasonably be expected to recur?”); *see also City of Erie v. Pap’s A.M.*, 529 U.S. 277, 287 (2000) (“The underlying concern is that, when the challenged conduct ceases such that there is no reasonable expectation that the wrong will be repeated, then it becomes impossible for the court to grant any effectual relief whatever to the prevailing party.” (citation, quotations, and brackets omitted)); *Friends of the Earth*, 528 U.S. at 189 (“The heavy burden of persuading the court that the challenged conduct cannot reasonably be expected to start up again lies with the party asserting mootness.” (quotation and brackets omitted)); *Ne. Fla. Chapter of Associated Gen. Contractors of Am. v. City of Jacksonville*, 508 U.S. 656, 676 (1993) (“[W]e have said that the defendant, to establish mootness, bears a heavy burden of demonstrat[ing] that there is no reasonable expectation that the wrong will be repeated.” (quotation omitted) (second brackets in original)). *But see Adarand Constructors, Inc. v. Slater*, 528 U.S. 216, 222 (2000) (“Voluntary cessation of challenged conduct moots a case, however, only if it is *absolutely* clear that the allegedly wrongful behavior could not reasonably be expected to recur.” (quotation omitted) (emphasis in original)). Moreover, although the defendant’s obligation is to show it is absolutely clear that “the allegedly wrongful behavior could not reasonably be expected to recur,” the Supreme Court has never suggested a defendant must make resumption of his conduct impossible.

¹⁷ Although a defendant’s “burden” may be heavy, it is also narrow in scope. “[M]ootness is jurisdictional and non-waivable.” *Winsness*, 433 F.3d at 736 n.4. When we suspect a case may be moot, we must study the question closely and conduct our own

But the burden is not insurmountable, especially in the context of government enforcement. “In practice, [this] heavy burden frequently has not prevented governmental officials from discontinuing challenged practices and mootng a case.” *Rio Grande Silvery Minnow v. Bureau of Reclamation*, 601 F.3d 1096, 1116 (10th Cir. 2010). Most cases that deny mootness following government officials’ voluntary cessation “rely on *clear showings* of reluctant submission [by governmental actors] and a desire to return to the old ways.” *Id.* at 1117 (brackets and emphasis in *Rio Grande Silvery Minnow*) (quoting 13C Charles Alan Wright, Arthur R. Miller & Edward H. Cooper, *Federal Practice and Procedure*, § 3533.6, at 311 (3d ed. 2008)); *see also Gessler*, 770 F.3d at 908 (same).

We have cited with approval the Fifth Circuit’s decision, in the government enforcement context, “not [to] require some physical or logical impossibility that the challenged policy will be reenacted absent evidence that the voluntary cessation is a sham for continuing possibly unlawful conduct.” *Rio Grande Silvery Minnow*, 601 F.3d at 1117-18 (quoting *Sossamon v. Lone*

assessment, *United States v. Hays*, 515 U.S. 737, 742 (1995) (“[F]ederal courts are under an independent obligation to examine their own jurisdiction.”), even if the defendant has made no efforts – or very poor ones – to convince us. *See Arbaugh v. Y&H Corp.*, 546 U.S. 500, 514 (2006) (“[S]ubject-matter jurisdiction, because it involves a court’s power to hear a case, can never be forfeited or waived.”). Thus, a defendant’s burden is limited to bringing forward information relevant to mootness. Failure to make persuasive arguments based on that information cannot defeat mootness.

Star State of Tex., 560 F.3d 316, 325 (5th Cir. 2009)). And we have indicated that government “self-correction . . . provides a secure foundation for mootness so long as it seems genuine.” *Id.* at 1118 (quoting Wright, Miller & Cooper, § 3533.7, at 326).

B. *Standard of Review*

“We review issues of standing de novo, accepting as true all material allegations of the complaint, and . . . construing the complaint in favor of the complaining party.” *Winsness*, 433 F.3d at 732 (quotations and brackets omitted) (ellipsis in original). “We review mootness de novo as a legal question.” *United States v. Fisher*, 805 F.3d 982, 989 (10th Cir. 2015). Mootness in this case turns on whether, following Mr. Buhman’s May 22, 2012 declaration, his allegedly unconstitutional conduct could “reasonably be expected to recur,” which is “squarely a legal determination.” *Sheely v. MRI Radiology Network, P.A.*, 505 F.3d 1173, 1188 n.15 (11th Cir. 2007).

We have addressed the standard of review for mootness based on voluntary cessation, stating that “courts must assess the likelihood that defendants will recommence the challenged, allegedly offensive conduct.” *Rio Grande Silvery Minnow*, 601 F.3d at 1122. We referred to this assessment as a “factual inquir[y]” and said “[o]ur review of this question is *de novo*.” *Id.* (quotation omitted).

As to mootness in this case, no evidentiary hearing was held, the parties did not contest the facts in

each other's declarations, and the district court needed only to resolve the legal question of mootness, not resolve disputed issues of fact relating to justiciability. Whether our consideration of the underlying facts is plenary or deferential, we conclude the Browns faced no credible threat of prosecution once Mr. Buhman submitted his declaration announcing the UCAO Policy. At that point, their case became moot.

C. *Analysis*

We assume without deciding that when the Browns filed their complaint, they had standing as to Mr. Buhman; that is, they were suffering an injury in fact – namely, “a credible threat of prosecution” under the Statute, *Susan B. Anthony List*, 134 S. Ct. at 2342 – caused by Mr. Buhman and redressable by him. But the district court lost jurisdiction after May 2012, when Mr. Buhman submitted a declaration announcing the UCAO Policy. That policy forbids enforcing the Statute against the Browns, making it clear that prosecution of the Browns “could not reasonably be expected to recur.” *Already*, 133 S. Ct. at 727 (quotation omitted). The UCAO Policy rendered this case moot, and, as we discuss below, the voluntary cessation exception to mootness does not apply.¹⁸

¹⁸ Mr. Buhman did not argue in his opening appeal brief that the Browns lacked standing to bring their claims or that this action became moot before the district court entered its summary judgment order. But “[t]he question of standing is not subject to waiver.” *Hays*, 515 U.S. at 742. Mootness is similarly “non-waivable.” *N.M. ex rel. Richardson v. Bureau of Land Mgmt.*, 565

1. **The Browns' Case Is Moot Because They Are Under No Credible Threat of Prosecution**

Our mootness analysis proceeds in three parts. First, the Browns' complaint seeks only prospective relief, and mootness therefore turns on whether the district court had authority to enjoin future alleged constitutional violations. Second, because Mr. Buhman's declaration and the Browns' move to Nevada eliminated any reasonable expectation that the Browns will be prosecuted, we conclude the district court lacked such authority. Third, the Browns' arguments against mootness – that (1) *Winsness*, in which we found mootness, requires a different result here; (2) Mr. Buhman's successor could abandon the UCAO Policy; (3) Mr. Buhman continues to defend the Statute's constitutionality; and (4) Mr. Buhman adopted the UCAO Policy as a tactical maneuver to moot this case – are not persuasive.

a. *Only Prospective Relief Is at Issue*

Voluntary cessation cannot moot an action seeking damages because damages compensate a party for past

F.3d 683, 701 n.20 (10th Cir. 2009). Accordingly, “we are required to address the[se] issue[s] even if . . . the parties fail to raise the issue[s] before us.” *Hays*, 515 U.S. at 742; *see also Henderson ex rel. Henderson v. Shinseki*, 562 U.S. 428, 434 (2011) (“[F]ederal courts have an independent obligation to ensure that they do not exceed the scope of their jurisdiction, and therefore they must raise and decide jurisdictional questions that the parties either overlook or elect not to press.”). Our request for supplemental briefing was meant to give the parties an opportunity to argue this important threshold question.

conduct, not ongoing or future conduct. *See City of Los Angeles v. Lyons*, 461 U.S. 95, 109 (1983); *O'Connor v. Washburn Univ.*, 416 F.3d 1216, 1222 (10th Cir. 2005) (“The complaint, however, also includes a claim for nominal damages. . . . Unlike the claims for injunctive and declaratory relief, this claim is not mooted by [defendant’s voluntary cessation].”). But contrary to the district court’s understanding, the Browns did not sue for damages and therefore do not seek compensation for any past injuries they may have suffered at the hand of Mr. Buhman. They seek relief only for the future harm of prosecution. If there is no credible threat of such harm, their case is moot. *See Dias v. City & Cty. of Denver*, 567 F.3d 1169, 1176 (10th Cir. 2009) (“As the Supreme Court explained, ‘[p]ast exposure to illegal conduct does not in itself show a present case or controversy regarding injunctive relief . . . if unaccompanied by any continuing, present adverse effects.’” (alterations in original) (quoting *O’Shea v. Littleton*, 414 U.S. 488, 495-96 (1974))).

In their prayer for relief, the Browns requested only a declaratory judgment and an injunction, plus attorney fees and costs. They did not ask for damages. The complaint’s “Nature of the Action” section likewise asked for declaratory and injunctive relief, but not damages. And paragraph 14 of the complaint asserted, without any mention of damages, that jurisdiction exists under 28 U.S.C. § 1343(a)(4) “because this action seeks equitable relief under 42 U.S.C. § 1983.” App.,

Vol. 1 at 19.¹⁹ Because the complaint did not request damages, mootness depends on whether, following

¹⁹ Based on the residual clause in the complaint’s prayer for relief – which asks for “such other relief as [the district court] may deem just and proper” – the district court concluded the Browns had requested money damages. It relied on *Frazier v. Simmons*, 254 F.3d 1247 (10th Cir. 2001), where we held the plaintiff could seek injunctive relief because (1) his complaint requested “such other relief as the Court deems just and *equitable*,” and (2) “[i]n the pretrial order, the district court list[ed], as an issue of law, ‘[t]he nature and extent of any *equitable* relief to which Mr. Frazier may be entitled.’” 254 F.3d at 1251, 1255 (emphasis added) (last brackets in original). Analogizing to *Frazier*, the district court held the “just and proper” language in the Browns’ complaint, plus its reference to various past injuries they allegedly suffered as a result of Mr. Buhman’s conduct, were sufficient to plead damages. We think this analogy is too much of a stretch.

We have been careful to limit *Frazier* to its facts – in particular, the complaint’s reference to such other relief as the court deemed “just and *equitable*.” See *Guiden v. Morrow*, 92 F. App’x 663, 665-66 (10th Cir. 2004) (unpublished) (distinguishing *Frazier*); *Romero v. City & Cty. of Denver Dep’t of Soc. Serv’s.*, 57 F. App’x 835, 838 (10th Cir. 2003) (unpublished) (same). Here, nothing in the prayer for relief’s residual clause indicated a request for damages. “Just” and “proper” do not refer to monetary relief in the same way “equitable” can refer to injunctive relief. In addition, in *Frazier* we were “guide[d]” by an Eighth Circuit case that read similar language broadly because the plaintiff there had sued the defendant in his official capacity and so his “relief need[ed] to be in [injunctive] form to be effective.” See *id.* at 1254-55 (quoting *Andrus v. Arkansas*, 197 F.3d 953, 956 (8th Cir. 1999)). As explained in footnote 10, *supra*, by suing the Defendants only in their official capacities, the Browns may obtain only injunctive relief, not damages, for their § 1983 claims. The logic of *Andrus* therefore precludes reading the Browns’ complaint to include a request for damages, as relief sought against Mr. Buhman in his official capacity would be effective only in injunctive form. *Accord Emory v. United Air Lines, Inc.*, 720 F.3d 915, 921 n.10 (D.C. Cir. 2013) (“While it is true that Fed. R. Civ. P. 54(c) allows a court to

Mr. Buhman’s announcement of theUCAO Policy, the district court had Article III jurisdiction to award prospective relief to the Browns. We conclude it did not.

- b. *The Browns Do Not Face a Credible Threat of Prosecution*
 - i. There Is No Reasonable Expectation that Mr. Buhman Will Violate theUCAO Policy

Mr. Buhman’s May 2012 declaration unveiled theUCAO Policy, under which theUCAO will prosecute only those who (1) induce a partner to marry through misrepresentation or (2) are suspected of committing a collateral crime such as fraud or abuse. Nothing in the record suggests the Browns fit, or in the future may fit, into either category. Indeed, Mr. Buhman affirmed in his declaration that theUCAO had “determined that no other prosecutable crimes related to the bigamy allegation have been or are being committed by the Browns in Utah County as of the date of this declaration.” App., Vol. 2 at 329. The district court found it undisputed that theUCAO “ha[d] found no evidence of any crime by the Browns.” *Brown*, 947 F. Supp. 2d at

grant relief not specifically sought, we cannot save [the plaintiffs’] claim by reading the complaint’s boilerplate prayer for ‘such other relief as [the Court] may deem just and proper’ as a request for monetary damages.” (quotation omitted) (first brackets added)).

In any event, the Browns waived any request for damages before entry of the final judgment from which Mr. Buhman appeals. App., Vol. 3 at 654, 666-68. And the Browns have not renewed any request for damages on appeal. We therefore do not consider retrospective relief when assessing mootness.

1179. And Mr. Buhman declared that his office had decided not to file charges against the Browns.

Mr. Buhman further declared under penalty of perjury that the Browns will not be prosecuted unless they engage in criminal conduct beyond that proscribed by the Statute. To find this “voluntary cessation is a sham for continuing possibly unlawful conduct,” *Rio Grande Silvery Minnow*, 601 F.3d at 1118 (quotation omitted), we would have to conclude the highest-ranking law enforcement official in Utah County had engaged in deliberate misrepresentation to the court.

We see no basis for this conclusion. Close scrutiny of the relevant facts does not suggest Mr. Buhman is attempting to deceive the court. *See Am. Civil Liberties Union of Mass. v. U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops*, 705 F.3d 44, 56 (1st Cir. 2013) (“We understand [the voluntary cessation] exception to mootness to be highly sensitive to the facts of a given case.”).

Mr. Buhman declared that during his tenure as County Attorney, theUCAO had never before received a police report alleging violations of the Statute unconnected to a collateral crime such as fraud or abuse. That suggests why theUCAO in 2010 had no formal policy regarding polygamy prosecutions and why “no one in the office had any recollection of the Utah County Attorney’s Office ever prosecuting anyone for the practice of bigamy except, however, for the occasional bigamy case for marriage fraud or for failure to

obtain a divorce prior to remarrying.” App., Vol. 2 at 328.²⁰

Even assuming theUCAO Policy was a reaction to the Browns’ suit, that does not necessarily make it suspect. A government official’s decision to adopt a policy in the context of litigation may actually make it more likely the policy will be followed, especially with respect to the plaintiffs in that particular case. See *Rosebrock v. Mathis*, 745 F.3d 963, 972 (9th Cir. 2014) (“[W]e have indicated that mootness is more likely if . . . the case in question was the catalyst for the agency’s adoption of the new policy. . . .” (quotation and brackets omitted)); *Fed’n of Advert. Indus. Representatives, Inc. v. City of Chicago*, 326 F.3d 924, 931 (7th Cir. 2003) (“[T]he City candidly admits that [a recent court] decision persuaded it to repeal the ordinance because of the risk of losing in the litigation. We find that the City’s actions over the course of this litigation do not give rise to an expectation that it will reenact the challenged ordinance.”).

We see no basis to question Mr. Buhman’s bona fides after he publicly adopted under penalty of perjury and submitted to the federal court the same prosecution policy that the chief law enforcement officer of the state had previously adopted. The risk that Mr.

²⁰ According to Ms. Jex, during Mr. Buhman’s tenure theUCAO filed a bigamy charge against one defendant for which her Internet search failed to reveal additional charges. This is consistent with Mr. Buhman’s statement that theUCAO filed an “occasional” bigamy charge against defendants who had committed marriage fraud or failed to obtain a divorce before remarrying.

Buhman will revoke or ignore the UCAO Policy under these circumstances is minimal at best, and certainly not enough to sustain a live case or controversy. *See Moore v. Thieret*, 862 F.2d 148, 150 (7th Cir. 1988) (“If the likelihood [of recurrence] is small (it is never zero), the case is moot”).

Nothing in the record suggests Mr. Buhman has attempted “to evade judicial review, or to defeat a judgment, by *temporarily* altering questionable behavior.” *City News & Novelty, Inc.*, 531 U.S. at 284 n.1 (emphasis added). Instead, the record shows the UCAO has adopted, and intends to abide by, a policy under which the Browns face no threat of prosecution. Any prospective relief the district court might have awarded in the face of Mr. Buhman’s commitment would therefore have virtually no effect “in the real world.” *Wyoming*, 414 F.3d at 1212. Mr. Buhman’s declaration deprived the parties of a “concrete interest,” even a small one, “in the outcome of th[is] litigation.” *Chafin*, 133 S. Ct. at 1023.

If Mr. Buhman had announced only that his office had decided not to prosecute the Browns, the question of mootness would be closer. But he did much more than that. First, he announced an office policy that would prevent prosecution of the Browns and others similarly situated in the future. Second, the UCAO Policy is essentially the same as the AG Policy, which the district court considered sufficient to deny the Browns standing to sue the Governor and the Attorney General. Third, the UCAO Policy and the decision not to prosecute the Browns are contained in a declaration

that was signed under penalty of perjury and submitted to the federal district court. Fourth, violation of the declaration would expose Mr. Buhman to prosecution for perjury or contempt. *See* 18 U.S.C. § 1621(2) (providing that “[w]hoever . . . in any declaration . . . under penalty of perjury . . . willfully subscribes as true any material matter which he does not believe to be true . . . is guilty of perjury”); 28 U.S.C. § 1746(2) (permitting a declaration made under penalty of perjury to substitute for a sworn declaration, oath, or affidavit); 18 U.S.C. § 401(2) (empowering a federal court to “punish by fine or imprisonment, or both, at its discretion, such contempt of its authority, and none other, as . . . [m]isbehavior of any of its officers in their official transactions”). Under these circumstances, the Browns face no credible threat of prosecution from the Utah County Attorney.²¹

ii. *The Browns’ Move to Nevada Supports Finding Mootness*

Mr. Buhman’s May 12, 2012 declaration removed any credible threat of prosecution and mooted this case while it was pending in district court. Our mootness analysis could stop here. But apart from the foregoing, the Browns’ case also became moot because their move

²¹ In the absence of a credible threat of prosecution, any allegation of a subjective chilling effect on the exercise of First Amendment rights would not be sufficient to overcome mootness. *See Initiative & Referendum Inst. v. Walker*, 450 F.3d 1082, 1088-89 (10th Cir. 2006) (en banc).

to Nevada, their successive declarations, and the passage of time eventually eliminated Mr. Buhman's authority under Utah law to prosecute the Browns.

The Browns left Utah for Nevada in January 2011. They alleged in their complaint, filed in July 2011, that they could not “fully perform their religious practices outside of Utah and must return to Utah to engage in certain religious practices.” App., Vol. 1 at 22. They “expect[ed] to move back to Utah.” *Id.* According to an October 2011 declaration from Kody Brown, the Browns “travel[ed] back and forth to Utah to participate in religious and family activities.” *Id.* at 106. In another October 2011 declaration, Janelle Brown said that if the Statute were struck down, the Browns “would feel free to finally return to Utah and would certainly resume [their] open participation in [their] religious community.” *Id.* at 114. The district court wrote in its February 3, 2012 order on Defendants' motion to dismiss that “[o]nce the threat of prosecution is lifted, . . . [the Browns] expect to relocate to the State of Utah.” App., Vol. 2 at 247.

But circumstances changed. Mr. Brown subsequently told the district court in a July 2012 declaration – submitted two months after Mr. Buhman stated under oath that the UCAO had closed its case against the Browns – that “[w]e have decided to stay in Nevada in the foreseeable future to avoid uprooting our children again and subjecting them to the continued public recriminations made under the Utah law.” *Id.* at 487. The Browns have “continued ties to [Utah], including family and religious connections,” Mr. Brown said, but

“[we] have settled . . . in Nevada where our children now go to school and where we are in the process of finalizing the purchase of new homes.” *Id.* Mr. Brown’s declaration said “[t]he decision not to return to Utah was a difficult one for [his] family.” *Id.* There is nothing further in the record that suggests the Browns have reversed this decision. As the years have passed, these developments have made it increasingly difficult to conclude the Browns now face a credible threat of prosecution for past or future conduct even if Mr. Buhman had not adopted the UCAO Policy.²²

First, as to the Browns’ past conduct, Utah law provides “a prosecution for . . . a felony . . . shall be commenced within four years after it is committed.” Utah Code Ann. § 76-1-302(1)(a); *see also id.* § 76-7-101(2) (defining bigamy as a third-degree felony). The Browns have not lived in Utah for more than five years, and their post-2011 conduct in Nevada cannot subject them to liability in Utah. *See Nevares v. M.L.S.*,

²² After oral argument, the Browns submitted a supplemental filing identifying the portions of the record in which they “indicated a desire or intention to return to Utah if the threat of prosecution were negated.” Doc. 10337144 at 2. The Browns cite to the complaint, Janelle Brown’s and Kody Brown’s declarations, and the district court’s February 3, 2012 order granting in part Defendants’ motion to dismiss for lack of standing. These documents do not suggest the Browns have any current intention to return to Utah. Indeed, we rely on them – in particular the declarations – in concluding the Browns have settled in Nevada for the “foreseeable future.” App., Vol. 2 at 487. Moreover, as noted above, whether there is a credible threat to prosecute the Browns under the Statute turns on an objective assessment of the record and not the Browns’ subjective perceptions.

345 P.3d 719, 727 (Utah 2015) (“[U]nless a statute gives a clear indication of an extraterritorial application, it has none.” (quotation omitted)). The record does not reveal whether the Browns have traveled to Utah since October 2011, when Kody Brown signed his first declaration, or whether they “purported to marry” or “cohabited” there if they did. Nothing in the record indicates the Browns have violated the Statute in Utah within the four-year limitations period. It is therefore speculative at best that Mr. Buhman could prosecute the Browns for past conduct.

Second, Mr. Buhman will likely also be unable to prosecute the Browns for future conduct. In *Dias*, we held the plaintiffs lacked standing to challenge a Denver ordinance banning pit bull ownership because “none of the plaintiffs [then] reside[d] in Denver and none ha[d] alleged an intent to return.” 567 F.3d at 1176. They therefore did not face “a credible threat of future prosecution under the Ordinance.” *Id.* The Browns appear to be in the same position. Although the Browns may wish to move back to Utah some day, and although their declarations do not entirely foreclose the possibility that they will do so, they have announced their intention to remain in Nevada for “the foreseeable future.”²³ Unless and until the Browns return to Utah, Mr. Buhman could not, based on the law

²³ This statement appears in Kody Brown’s July 2012 declaration. Janelle Brown’s October 2011 declaration was somewhat equivocal on this point, indicating the Browns would “feel free” to return to Utah if the Statute were invalidated. But Kody Brown’s declaration, submitted nine months later, is more definitive. *See*

and the record, prosecute them even if he wished to do so. For this independent reason, the Browns face no credible threat of prosecution.

c. *The Browns' Arguments Against Mootness Are Not Persuasive*

The Browns insist we should discredit Mr. Buhman's announcement of the UCAO Policy. They deny his "allegedly wrongful behavior could not reasonably be expected to recur." *Already*, 133 S. Ct. at 727 (quotation omitted).

We have addressed and rejected this argument in the preceding analysis. We further address the Browns' specific arguments: that (1) our analysis in *Winsness* governs this appeal, (2) the possibility that Mr. Buhman's successor could ignore the UCAO Policy defeats mootness, (3) Mr. Buhman's failure to renounce the Statute's constitutionality makes prosecution of the Browns more than speculative, and (4) Mr. Buhman's tactical motivation for adopting the UCAO Policy renders his pledge to abide by that policy not credible. None of these arguments is persuasive.

Lujan, 504 U.S. at 564 (holding affidavits expressing intent to return to Egypt and Sri Lanka to observe threatened species were "simply not enough" to confer standing – "[s]uch 'some day' intentions – without any description of concrete plans, or indeed even any specification of *when* the some day will be – do not support a finding of the 'actual or imminent' injury that our cases require" (emphasis in original)).

i. The So-Called “Winsness Factors” Are Not Controlling Doctrine

First, the Browns contend we should evaluate mootness under the three “Winsness factors” they say we have employed in similar cases. Suppl. Aplee. Br. at 17. The district court “f[ound] these factors helpful and . . . rel[ie]d] on them” to analyze mootness. App., Vol. 2 at 491.

In *Winsness*, the police cited Mr. Winsness for burning a symbol onto an American flag and hanging it from his garage. *Winsness*, 433 F.3d at 729. An assistant district attorney charged Mr. Winsness with flag abuse but dismissed the charges before trial. *Id.* at 730. Mr. Winsness then filed a § 1983 suit in federal court, seeking to enjoin enforcement of Utah’s flag-abuse statute, arguing it violated the First and Fourteenth Amendments. *Id.* In an affidavit attached to his motion to dismiss, the Salt Lake County District Attorney declared that the “‘enforceability of the Utah flag abuse statute [wa]s doubtful’ in light of *Texas v. Johnson*[, 491 U.S. 397 (1989)]” and that “[u]nless and until the constitutional doubts about the Utah statute are eliminated through a constitutional amendment or a new decision of the United States Supreme Court, [he had] no intention of prosecuting . . . anyone . . . under the statute.’” *Id.* at 731 (third brackets in original). The assistant district attorney also declared that “[u]nless the law changes, Mr. Winsness need have no fear of prosecution if he desecrates or alters a flag as a form of political expression.’” *Id.* The district court granted

the state's motion to dismiss, concluding the prosecutors' affidavits eliminated any injury in fact. *Id.*

On appeal, we held Mr. Winsness lacked standing when he filed suit. *Id.* at 734. Alternatively, we also said the affidavits mooted the case. *Id.* at 736. "The veracity of the[] affidavits," we said, "is bolstered both by the prosecutors' actions, quickly repudiating the citation against Mr. Winsness, and by *Texas v. Johnson*, which gives the prosecutors good reason to avoid initiating potentially futile prosecutions." *Id.*

One year later, in *Mink*, we considered a pre-enforcement constitutional challenge to Colorado's criminal libel statute. 482 F.3d at 1248-49. Our analysis of whether that challenge was moot included a brief discussion of *Winsness*: "We found [the prosecutors'] assurances established mootness since the government (1) had quickly repudiated the action initially taken against Winsness, (2) its statements were made in sworn affidavits, and (3) it based its decision on controlling Supreme Court precedent, making future prosecutions unlikely." *Id.* at 1256. We concluded these "*Winsness* factor[s]" also "cut against" finding a live case or controversy in Mr. Mink's case. *Id.* at 1256-57.

The Browns argue we should analyze mootness in pre-enforcement cases by weighing the "*Winsness* factors." As an initial matter, *Winsness* is factually distinguishable. Mr. Winsness, unlike the Browns, was actually charged under the statute he sought to challenge, making his injury substantially more concrete than the Browns'.

Moreover, *Winsness* did not purport to state a definitive test that would govern in every case. Rather, in explaining why “the threat of prosecution ha[d] been eliminated,” we pointed to the prosecutors’ affidavits and remarked that the veracity of those affidavits was “bolstered” by the three factors we later identified in *Mink*. *Winsness*, 433 F.3d at 736. The “*Winsness* factors” described some evidence supporting the prosecutors’ credibility, not a doctrinal test. Although our analysis in *Mink* drew upon these factors, we never held or even suggested they should control in future cases. And neither *Winsness* nor *Mink* foreclosed other factors from “bolstering” the veracity of a policy not to prosecute.

Winsness represents a fact-specific application of the general rule that voluntary cessation moots a case when “the allegedly wrongful behavior c[an]not reasonably be expected to recur.” *Already*, 133 S. Ct. at 727 (quotation omitted). The district court in this case erred when it limited its analysis to weighing the “*Winsness* factors” and ignored the broader lesson of *Winsness* and *Mink*: that evidence supporting the veracity of the decision and the policy not to prosecute is important to the mootness analysis. That evidence need not be limited to the “*Winsness* factors.”

ii. The Possibility that a Future County Attorney May Change theUCAO Policy Does Not Defeat Mootness

Second, the Browns argue they are not free from the threat of prosecution because theUCAO Policy

“does not and cannot ‘bind the future actions or policies of successor Utah County attorneys.’” Suppl. Aplee. Br. at 18 (quotation omitted). The district court accepted this argument, basing its mootness holding in part on its belief that theUCAO Policy was simply “an exercise of prosecutorial discretion that could easily be reversed in the future by a successor Utah County Attorney.” App., Vol. 2 at 496.²⁴

To argue that a county attorney cannot bind future county attorneys to his non-prosecution policy is unremarkable and unpersuasive. Of course a future county attorney could change theUCAO Policy, but that possibility does not breathe life into an otherwise moot case. If it did, federal courts would be free to exercise judicial review of any rarely used state statute based on the hypothetical that some unknown and yet-to-be-elected local prosecutor someday may flout or change office policy and decide to enforce it. We are not aware of any Article III basis that would permit federal courts to do this.

For voluntary cessation to moot a case, we must be convinced that “the allegedly wrongful behavior could not *reasonably* be expected to recur,” *Already*, 133 S. Ct. at 727 (emphasis added) (quotation omitted), not that there is no possibility of future enforcement. The latter showing would likely be impossible in most cases. *See Rio Grande Silvery Minnow*, 601 F.3d at

²⁴ This concern did not trouble the district court when it dismissed the Governor and the Attorney General from this case based on the AG Policy, which also cannot bind successive attorneys general.

1117-18 (“We will not require some physical or logical impossibility that the challenged policy will be reenacted absent evidence that the voluntary cessation is a sham for continuing possibly unlawful conduct.” (quotation omitted)); *Mink*, 482 F.3d at 1255 (“[W]e have held the possibility of future enforcement need not be reduced to zero to defeat standing. It is not necessary for defendants to refute and eliminate all possible risk that the statute might be enforced to demonstrate a lack of a case or controversy.” (quotations and brackets omitted)); *Comm. for First Amendment v. Campbell*, 962 F.2d 1517, 1525 (10th Cir. 1992) (“Defendants’ burden concerning the unlikelihood of recurrence is a heavy one, but it by no means requires proof approaching metaphysical certitude.”); *see also Clarke v. United States*, 915 F.2d 699, 702 (D.C. Cir. 1990) (“Of course we cannot say that the risk of an attempted prosecution is zero. . . . But zero risk is not the test.”); *Moore*, 862 F.2d at 150 (“If the likelihood [of recurrence] is small (it is never zero), the case is moot.”).

One of the plaintiffs in *Winsness* made a similar argument. He asserted the district court should retain jurisdiction over his § 1983 suit because “[the district attorney’s] political successors might repudiate [his] policy, or [the plaintiff] might be arrested elsewhere in the state, or police officers who have not been informed of [the district attorney’s] policy and have not been instructed not to enforce the statute might do so.” 433 F.3d at 733. We rejected this contention, explaining that “it is not necessary for defendants in such cases to refute and eliminate all possible risk that the statute

might be enforced.” *Id.* The same logic applies in this case.

Although Mr. Buhman cannot control his successors and extend his non-prosecution pledge in perpetuity, there is no reasonable expectation the Browns will face prosecution. The small number of prior UCAO prosecutions – three in a ten-year period, at least two of which also involved charges for collateral crimes – reinforces this conclusion. The UCAO Policy is consistent with, not a departure from, what was apparently a longstanding de facto policy of non-prosecution. And it is consistent with the AG Policy. As a result, the prospect that a future Utah County Attorney will begin prosecuting defendants like the Browns is speculative and remote.

The district court erred by relying on Mr. Buhman’s inability to bind future county attorneys.

iii. Mr. Buhman’s Failure to Renounce the Statute’s Constitutionality Does Not Defeat Mootness

Third, the Browns insist – and the district court agreed – that we should not take the UCAO Policy at face value because Mr. Buhman “continues to maintain the [Statute’s] constitutionality and enforceability.” Suppl. Aplee. Br. at 18. This view, which merely repackages part of the Browns’ argument in favor of the “*Winsness* factors,” holds that a prosecutor’s promise not to bring charges is credible only if he believes

enforcement would be unconstitutional. We have never adopted this position, and we decline to do so here.

In *Winsness* and *Mink*, we credited the prosecutors' acknowledgement that the charging statutes were unconstitutional as giving them "good reason to avoid initiating potentially futile prosecutions." *Winsness*, 433 F.3d at 736; *Mink*, 482 F.3d at 1257; *see also Wis. Right to Life, Inc. v. Schober*, 366 F.3d 485, 492 (7th Cir. 2004) ("[W]e . . . hold[] that a case is moot when a state agency acknowledges that it will not enforce a statute because it is plainly unconstitutional, in spite of the failure of the legislature to remove the statute from the books."). But contrary to the district court's suggestion, we gave no indication such an acknowledgement is especially probative, much less a significant factor in holding a case moot.

A prosecutor's belief a statute is constitutional does not provide much help in determining the risk of future prosecution. Nor does it render unreliable his or her statements to the court – signed under penalty of perjury – that he will not enforce it. *See Rio Grande Silvery Minnow*, 601 F.3d at 1118 n.17 ("Although the failure of a governmental agency to acknowledge the impropriety of its former, challenged course of conduct certainly is not an irrelevant factor in the voluntary-cessation analysis, it is not dispositive."). Prosecutors can be committed to a non-prosecution policy for reasons unrelated to a statute's constitutionality. *See Am. Civil Liberties Union of Mass.*, 705 F.3d at 55 n.9 ("It is not a purpose of the [voluntary cessation] doctrine to require an admission from the defendant that the now

ceased conduct was illegal. Mootness turns on future threats, not upon penance.” (quotation omitted)).

Here, Mr. Buhman’s continued belief in the Statute’s constitutionality does not show he will disregard the statements he made to the district court under penalty of perjury.

iv. Mr. Buhman’s Motives for Announcing the UCAO Policy Do Not Defeat Mootness

Finally, the Browns argue there remains a live controversy because Mr. Buhman announced the UCAO Policy for tactical reasons to strip the district court of jurisdiction over the Browns’ claims. Unlike the district court, we are not persuaded.

Mr. Buhman may have been motivated to institute the UCAO Policy to end the Browns’ litigation. Nineteen months had passed between the UCAO’s receipt of the Lehi Police Department’s report in October 2010 and Mr. Buhman’s second declaration in May 2012. He submitted that declaration four months after the district court dismissed Mr. Herbert and Mr. Shurtleff on the ground that the AG Policy – which is materially identical to the UCAO Policy – deprived the Browns of standing to sue those defendants. But even if the UCAO Policy was tactical, this motive alone does not defeat mootness. The ultimate question is whether the UCAO Policy eliminates a credible threat of prosecution.

The Browns point out that we have said “[v]oluntary cessation of offensive conduct will only moot litigation if it is clear that the defendant has not changed course simply to deprive the court of jurisdiction.” *Ind.*, 801 F.3d at 1214 (brackets in original) (quotation omitted). But this statement must be reconciled with the rule that the existence of a live case or controversy depends on whether “the allegedly wrongful behavior could . . . reasonably be expected to recur,” *Already*, 133 S. Ct. at 727 (quotation omitted) – not on whether a government official has acted out of tactical motives. See *Beta Upsilon Chi Upsilon Chapter at the Univ. of Fla. v. Machen*, 586 F.3d 908, 915 (11th Cir. 2009) (“We are not concerned with [the defendant’s] motivation for changing its registration policy, but only with whether a justiciable controversy exists.”).

A prosecutor’s motives for ceasing allegedly unlawful behavior may be relevant to the credibility of his representation that the plaintiffs will not be prosecuted. When a prosecutor drops charges merely to be rid of a bothersome federal lawsuit, there may be reason to question whether the no-charge commitment is genuine. See *McCormack v. Herzog*, 788 F.3d 1017, 1025 (9th Cir. 2015) (“A presumption of good faith . . . cannot overcome a court’s wariness of applying mootness under protestations of repentance and reform, especially when abandonment seems timed to anticipate suit, and there is probability of resumption.” (emphasis added) (quotation omitted)). But if the allegedly unlawful conduct cannot “reasonably be expected to recur,” it does not matter that the prosecutor ruled out

prosecution because he wished to prevent adjudication of the federal claim on the merits. Either a live controversy exists, or it does not. Federal courts may not exercise jurisdiction over a case simply because the defendant wished the suit to end when ceasing his or her allegedly unlawful conduct.

* * *

In sum, the Browns' arguments that Buhman's adoption of the UCAO Policy does not moot this case – (1) we must apply the “*Winsness* factors,” (2) his successor could change it, (3) he thinks the Statute is constitutional, and (4) he adopted it to end the lawsuit – do not withstand scrutiny. The first point misreads the case law, the second is speculative, the third is minimally relevant, and the fourth may actually assure compliance with the UCAO Policy because any steps to reconsider would almost certainly provoke a new lawsuit against him. Such steps also would damage Mr. Buhman's credibility as a public official and might even expose him to prosecution for perjury and contempt of federal court for violating his declaration. Assessing the veracity of the UCAO Policy must account for all relevant factors, which together show no credible threat of prosecution of the Browns.

Mr. Buhman's May 2012 declaration is credible. He declared under penalty of perjury that the Browns will not be prosecuted absent evidence of a collateral crime. And the dearth of prior UCAO prosecutions under the Statute – at least for bare violations unconnected to collateral crimes – indicates his position

is not mere posturing. See *Susan B. Anthony List*, 134 S. Ct. at 2345 (“We have observed that past enforcement against the same conduct is good evidence that the threat of enforcement is not chimerical.” (quotations omitted)); *D.L.S. v. Utah*, 374 F.3d 971, 975 (10th Cir. 2004) (“[A] plaintiff cannot show a real threat of prosecution in the face of assurances of non-prosecution from the government merely by pointing to a single past prosecution of a different person for different conduct.”).²⁵

This case lacks “*clear showings* of reluctant submission [by Mr. Buhman] and a desire to return to the old ways.” *Gessler*, 770 F.3d at 908 (emphasis in original) (quotation omitted). On the contrary, the record

²⁵ In addition, the district court questioned the sincerity of Mr. Buhman’s declaration because “[t]here is no evidence that the notice of the change in policy was given to the public generally or distributed within the county attorney’s office.” App., Vol. 2 at 492; see also *id.* at 494 (“The failure to give public notice of the change in policy, however, adds to the concern that the action was taken primarily for purposes of this litigation.”). We fail to see the relevance of this fact. Prosecutors do not generally advertise their enforcement policies to the public, and Mr. Buhman’s failure to do so in this case does not throw his credibility into doubt. Moreover, by filing his declaration and theUCAO Policy with the district court, the Policy became a public document.

The district court’s concern that Mr. Buhman has “not repudiate[d] [sic] that punishment may be enhanced if a defendant were convicted under the [Statute] and another offense” is similarly misplaced. *Id.* at 494. The record indicates theUCAO has no evidence that the Browns have committed other crimes. Accordingly, the hypothetical possibility that they might one day be prosecuted for a collateral crime does not bear on (1) the credibility of Mr. Buhman’s declaration or (2) the existence of a live controversy.

shows Mr. Buhman intends to follow the terms of the UCAO Policy, including and especially with respect to the Browns. Fear that Mr. Buhman intends to prosecute the Browns in the future would not be “objectively justified.” *Winsness*, 433 F.3d at 732. Accordingly, “the issues presented are no longer ‘live’” and “the parties lack a legally cognizable interest in the outcome” of this case. *Chafin*, 133 S. Ct. at 1023 (quotation omitted); see *Tandy v. City of Wichita*, 380 F.3d 1277, 1291 (10th Cir. 2004) (“Nothing in the record suggests that Wichita Transit intends to resume its discontinued policies if this case is dismissed as moot. Under such circumstances, it is absolutely clear the allegedly wrongful behavior could not reasonably be expected to recur.” (quotation omitted)).

Mr. Buhman’s May 2012 declaration rendered the Browns’ case constitutionally moot.²⁶

2. Vacatur

“If the district court lacked jurisdiction, we have jurisdiction on appeal, not of the merits but merely for the purpose of correcting the error of the lower court in entertaining the suit.” *Rio Grande Silvery Minnow*, 601 F.3d at 1128 n.19 (quotation omitted). “When a

²⁶ Because the district court lacked Article III jurisdiction to resolve the Browns’ claims, we need not decide whether it abused its discretion by finding those claims were not prudentially moot. See *Jordan*, 654 F.3d at 1023 n.14 (“[W]e ordinarily review a district court’s prudential mootness determination for an abuse of discretion.” (emphasis omitted)).

case becomes moot prior to final adjudication, the district court was without jurisdiction to enter the judgment, and vacatur and dismissal of the judgment is automatic.” *Id.* (quotation, emphasis, and brackets omitted).

“It is fundamental, of course, that a dismissal for lack of jurisdiction is not an adjudication of the merits and therefore dismissal . . . must be without prejudice.” *Abernathy v. Wandes*, 713 F.3d 538, 558 (10th Cir. 2013) (quoting *Martinez v. Richardson*, 472 F.2d 1121, 1126 (10th Cir. 1973)).

The proper disposition of this appeal, therefore, is to remand to the district court with instructions to vacate its judgment in favor of the Browns and dismiss this suit without prejudice.²⁷

IV. CONCLUSION

Assuming the Browns had standing to file suit in July 2011, this case became moot when Mr. Buhman announced the UCAO Policy in May 2012. That policy eliminated any credible threat that the Browns will be

²⁷ As explained above, the Browns’ move to Nevada eventually also rendered this case moot. Whether or not this basis for mootness took effect before commencement of this appeal, Mr. Buhman’s implementation of the UCAO Policy was independently sufficient to extinguish any live case or controversy as of May 2012, a year and a half before the district court granted summary judgment to the Browns and over two years before entry of final judgment. Because this case became moot “prior to final adjudication,” *Rio Grande Silvery Minnow*, 601 F.3d at 1128 n.19, vacatur and dismissal without prejudice are appropriate.

prosecuted. We therefore remand to the district court with instructions to vacate its judgment and dismiss this suit without prejudice.

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF UTAH, CENTRAL DIVISION

KODY BROWN,
MERI BROWN,
JANELLE BROWN,
CHRISTINE BROWN,
ROBYN SULLIVAN,

Plaintiffs,

v.

GARY R. HERBERT,
MARK SHURTLEFF,
JEFFREY R. BUHMAN,

Defendants.

**MEMORANDUM
DECISION AND
JUDGMENT**

(Filed Aug. 27, 2014)

Case No. 2:11-CV-0652-CW

Judge Clark Waddoups

MEMORANDUM DECISION

The court granted in part Plaintiffs' Motion for Summary Judgment (Dkt. No. 49), denying Defendant's Cross-Motion for Summary Judgment (Dkt. No. 55), in its Memorandum Decision and Order dated December 13, 2013 (Dkt. No. 78). That Order, however, left unresolved the matter of Plaintiffs' claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, and in a status conference held on January 17, 2014, the court requested supplemental briefing on the issue.

Defendant contends that his failure to include an affirmative defense or any answer to Plaintiffs' Section 1983 claim in his Answer (Dkt. No. 33) or in any of his

briefs in the summary judgment process does not constitute a waiver of prosecutorial immunity or qualified immunity as defenses because Plaintiffs did not properly seek an award of money damages against him. (Def.'s Resp. to Pls.' Resp. 5 [Dkt. No. 89].) This line of argument, though creative, is not persuasive. Plaintiffs unambiguously asserted a number of specific injuries in their Complaint that entitle them to monetary damages. (*See, e.g.*, Compl. ¶¶ 172-77 [Dkt. No. 1].) Moreover, in connection with the recitation of these injuries, Plaintiffs explicitly seek to “recover all of their attorneys’ fees, costs, and expenses incurred in this action pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1988, *and any other relief that this Court may order.*” (*Id.* at ¶ 29 (emphasis added).) In fact, in their Prayer for Relief at the conclusion of their Complaint, they include their claim under Section 1983 with the rest of their Constitutional claims and follow their request pursuant to Section 1988 with a specific request that the court “award such other relief as it may deem just and proper.” (*Id.* at 39, ¶ 4.) As the Tenth Circuit noted in *Frazier v. Simmons*, the plaintiff’s request for monetary damages and “such other relief as the court deems just and equitable” was sufficient to put the defendant in that case on notice that he also sought injunctive relief, which protected his claim from an Eleventh Amendment immunity defense. 254 F.3d 1247, 1254-55 (10th Cir. 2001) (concluding that through this language and the “nature of the harms” he alleged, “Mr. Frazier sufficiently indicated in his complaint, and the district court repeated in its pretrial order, that he sought prospective

equitable relief against Mr. Simmons,” though also noting that such a “boilerplate recitation . . . included in one’s prayer for relief is far from an exemplary request for” the desired relief). The same logic requires the court to find that Defendant was adequately on notice that Plaintiffs were seeking money damages in addition to the injunctive and constitutional relief sought.

Defendant, therefore, has waived his various immunity defenses by not raising them in his Answer, as was his duty under Rule 8(c)(1) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, or opposing or mentioning Plaintiffs’ assertion of their Section 1983 claim in their Complaint, their Motion for Summary Judgment, and their Opposition to Defendant’s Cross-Motion. The court must view this as a conscious decision on the part of Defendant, a decision that has consequences under the orderly administration of justice in the federal courts. “Failure to plead an affirmative defense results in a waiver of that defense.” *Bentley v. Cleveland Cnty. Bd of Cnty. Comm’rs*, 41 F.3d 600, 604 (10th Cir. 1994). This is so well settled a principle under the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure that “the very possibility of waiver makes it important (and certainly prudent) to plead all appropriate affirmative defenses,” specifically to avoid waiver. *H.S. Field Servs. v. CEP Mid-Continent, LLC*, No. 12-cv-531-JED-PJC, 2013 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 137341, at *3-*4 (N.D. Okla. Sept. 25, 2013).

The court must therefore agree with Plaintiffs that Defendant’s approach of neither raising the defenses of qualified immunity or prosecutorial immunity as affirmative defenses, or even mentioning them

in the briefing responding to Plaintiffs' Section 1983 claim constitutes a waiver of these defenses. If not, "there would be little reason for parties to completely answer a complaint or offer a full defense to summary judgment. Defendant has not claimed the right to retroactively claim such defenses, but such a claim would allow parties to adopt a nondefense position as to a claim and later ask for an exemption from the rules when an obvious waiver is raised. There is no provision in the federal rules for such a judicial equivalent of a Mulligan for the hapless or absent litigant." (Pl.'s Resp. to Court Order 14 [Dkt. No. 85].)

The court therefore finds in favor of Plaintiffs on their seventh and final count in the Complaint under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 and GRANTS summary judgment in their favor on this last remaining count. Plaintiffs, however, have chosen to drop their claim for monetary damages aside from attorney's fees: "[Plaintiffs] believe strongly that the focus of the case should be on the Court's historic ruling and not their insular losses associated with the criminal investigation and public comments of the Defendant. To that end, they will not ask for repayment of their moving costs, loss of contracts, or other expenses detailed in the prior filings," although "reserve[ing] their right to seek attorneys' fees in this case." (*Id.* at 2 & n.1.) In severing the cohabitation prong¹ of Utah's Anti-Bigamy Statute, Utah

¹ The court found that the phrase "or cohabits with another person" in the Statute violates the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, *Brown v. Buhman*, 947 F.Supp.2d 1170, 1203-21 (D. Utah 2013), and is also

Code Ann. § 76-7-101(1) in its Memorandum Decision and Order Granting in Part Plaintiffs' Motion for Summary Judgment dated December 13, 2013 (Dkt. No. 78), the court has therefore provided the relief sought while leaving the Statute in force as narrowly construed in the absence of the cohabitation prong. That Order is fully incorporated herein for purposes of the below final Judgment in this case.

JUDGMENT

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED, ADJUDGED, AND DECREED that Utah Code Ann. § 76-7-101 (2013) is facially unconstitutional in that the phrase “or cohabits with another person” is a violation of the Free

without a rational basis under the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, *id.* at 1222-25. The court, however, acknowledged that “it is not the role of federal courts in the constitutional framework of checks and balances to ‘rewrite a state law to conform it to constitutional requirements.’” *Id.* at 1226 (quoting *Virginia v. Am. Booksellers Ass’n*, 484 U.S. 383, 397 (1988)). Thus, the court adopted a “narrowing construction,” *id.* at 1231-32, of the accompanying phrase “purports to marry another person” as required by the canon of constitutional avoidance, “under which [t]he elementary rule is that every reasonable construction must be resorted to, in order to save a statute from unconstitutionality.” *Id.* at 1226 (quoting *Gonzales v. Carhart*, 550 U.S. 124, 153 (2007)). This obliged the court “to save the Statute from being invalidated in its entirety,” if the Statute were “readily susceptible” to such a narrowing construction. *Id.* at 1233. As a result, “under this narrowing construction, the Statute remains in force, submitting anyone residing in Utah, knowing he has a wife or she has a husband or knowing the other person has a husband or wife, to prosecution for the crime of bigamy for entering into any further purportedly legal union.” *Id.* at 1233-34.

Exercise Clause of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution and is without a rational basis under the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment; to preserve the integrity of the Statute, as enacted by the Utah State Legislature, the Court hereby severs the phrase “or cohabits with another person” from Utah Code § 76-7-101(1); it is further

ORDERED, ADJUDGED, AND DECREED that the statute is readily susceptible to and the Court hereby adopts a narrowing construction of the terms “marry” and “purports to marry” to save the Statute from being invalidated in its entirety, and that portion of the Statute is upheld as constitutional; it is further

ORDERED, ADJUDGED, AND DECREED that the Plaintiffs, as prevailing parties in an action for enforcement of civil rights under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, are entitled to an award of attorney’s fees, costs, and expenses incurred in this action under 42 U.S.C. § 1988 upon further and proper application.

SO ORDERED this 27th day of August, 2014.

BY THE COURT:

/s/ Clark Waddoups
Clark Waddoups
United States District
Court Judge

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF UTAH, CENTRAL DIVISION

KODY BROWN,
MERI BROWN,
JANELLE BROWN,
CHRISTINE BROWN,
ROBYN SULLIVAN,

Plaintiffs,

v.

GARY R. HERBERT,
MARK SHURTLEFF,
JEFFREY R. BUHMAN,

Defendants.

**MEMORANDUM
DECISION AND
ORDER**

(Filed Jun. 22, 2015)

Case No. 2:11-CV-0652-CW

Judge Clark Waddoups

INTRODUCTION¹

On February 3, 2012, the court entered a memorandum decision and order granting in part and denying in part Defendants' motion to dismiss on the grounds that Plaintiffs' claims lack standing. (Dkt. No. 31). The court held that while Plaintiffs had not alleged facts sufficient to allow a suit to go forward against Defendants Gary Herbert, the Governor of Utah, and Mark Shurtleff, the Attorney General of Utah, the alleged facts were sufficient to allow Plaintiffs standing to maintain their claims against Defendant Jeffrey

¹ For a more thorough review of the factual background of this suit, see the court's memorandum decision and order dated February 3, 2012. (Dkt. No. 31).

Buhman, the Utah County Attorney. Now before the court is Mr. Buhman's motion to dismiss (Dkt. No. 46) on the ground that Plaintiffs' claims are now moot as a result of his office's recent adoption of a policy that residents of Utah County will not be prosecuted for violating Utah's anti-bigamy statute except in cases where such a violation is committed in connection with some other violation of the law. For the reasons stated below, the court DENIES Mr. Buhman's motion to dismiss.

DISCUSSION

I. ARTICLE III MOOTNESS

"The constitutional mootness doctrine is grounded in Article III's requirement that federal courts only decide actual, ongoing cases or controversies. . . . The central question in determining whether a case has become moot is whether the issues presented are no longer live or the parties lack a legally cognizable interest in the outcome." *Phelps v. Hamilton*, 122 F.3d 1309, 1326 (10th Cir. 1997) (internal quotation marks and citation omitted). To sustain jurisdiction over a federal case, "it is not enough that a dispute was very much alive when suit was filed. . . . The parties must continue to have a personal stake in the outcome of the lawsuit." *Lewis v. Continental Bank Corp.*, 494 U.S. 472 (1990) (internal quotation marks and citation omitted). Thus, "[w]hen intervening acts destroy a party's legally cognizable interest in the lawsuit, the federal courts are deprived of jurisdiction." *Mink v. Suthers*,

482 F.3d 1244, 1256 (10th Cir. 2007) (internal quotation marks and citation omitted).

“Merely stopping the complained of conduct ordinarily is not enough, however, to establish mootness.” *Id.* See also *Friends of the Earth, Inc. v. Laidlaw Environmental Services (TOC), Inc.*, 528 U.S. 167, 189 (2000) (“[A] defendant’s voluntary cessation of a challenged practice does not deprive a federal court of its power to determine the legality of the practice. If it did, the courts would be compelled to leave the defendant free to return to his old ways.”) (internal quotation marks and citation omitted). To show that a particular suit is moot as a result of a voluntary cessation of the challenged practice, a party asserting mootness has the “heavy burden of persuading the court that the challenged conduct cannot reasonably be expected to start up again. . . .” *Friends of the Earth, Inc.*, 528 U.S. at 189.

Although the burden of persuading the court that the challenged activity is not likely to be repeated is a heavy one, it is not insurmountable. “[I]n many circumstances it is obvious previously threatened conduct cannot reasonably be expected to recur.” *Mink*, 482 F.3d at 1256 (citation omitted). On at least two occasions, the Tenth Circuit has found that a categorical announcement from a government attorney that no prosecutions would be brought under a particular statute was sufficient to moot a challenge to the constitutionality of the statute. See *Mink*, 482 F.2d at 1256-57 (opinion letter from prosecutor stating that the challenged statute could not be constitutionally applied to

the conduct attributed to the plaintiff and that no charges would be filed against Plaintiff in the future was sufficient to moot challenge to statute's constitutionality); *Winsness v. Yocom*, 433 F.3d 727, 736 (challenge to constitutionality of flag burning statute moot because prosecutor had "categorically announc[ed] that his office [would] bring no prosecutions under the statute" and because recent Supreme Court precedent had made it clear that any future prosecutions under the statute would be futile).

In *Mink*, the Tenth Circuit identified three factors which it relied on to determine that the government attorney's assurance of non-prosecution established mootness: (1) the government quickly repudiated the actions initially taken against the plaintiff; (2) the government's promise of non-prosecution was made in sworn affidavits; and (3) the government's decision was based on controlling Supreme Court precedent, making future prosecutions unlikely. 482 F.3d at 1256. The court finds these factors helpful and will rely on them to determine whether Mr. Buhman's adoption of a policy not to prosecute residents of Utah County, including Plaintiffs, for violation of Utah's anti-bigamy statute unless they have engaged in additional criminal conduct is sufficient to moot Plaintiffs' claims in this case.

The court finds that the first factor weighs against a finding of mootness in this case. The threat of prosecution that Plaintiffs complain of was alleged to have arisen in the fall of 2010 when prosecutors in the Utah County Attorney's office told the press that they were

investigating Plaintiffs and that Plaintiffs had “made it easier for [them] by admitting to felonies on national TV.” *See* Civil Rights Complaint 29 (Dkt. No. 1). The court determined, in an order dated February 3, 2012, that the alleged conduct of members of the Utah County Attorney’s office was sufficient to give Plaintiffs standing to bring suit against Mr. Buhman to seek a declaratory judgment that the Utah anti-bigamy statute is unconstitutional. (Dkt. No. 31). Mr. Buhman then filed a motion to dismiss the case for mootness on May 31, 2012, accompanied by a declaration stating that his office had adopted the non-prosecution policy at issue in this matter. (Dkt. No. 47). The declaration was signed on May 22, 2012, and there is no evidence that the formal non-prosecution policy was adopted before that date. *See* Second Decl. of Jeffrey R. Buhman Ex. 1 (Dkt. No. 47). There is no evidence that notice of the change in policy was given to the public generally or distributed within the county attorney’s office. The only apparent public notice was the filing of the motion with the attached declaration. The position taken in the motion was reported by various local news media sources.

Mr. Buhman’s adoption of a formal non-prosecution policy happened over eighteen months after the alleged conduct giving rise to the threat of prosecution of Plaintiffs occurred. This cannot be considered a “quick repudiation” of the actions initially taken against Plaintiffs. Furthermore, Mr. Buhman’s adoption of the new policy happened several months after his motion to dismiss Plaintiffs’ claims on the grounds

of standing had been denied by the court and, also, after the claims against the state defendants had been dismissed because the court found that under the policy of the state attorney general's office there was no threat of prosecution. The timing of Mr. Buhman's adoption of the policy at issue suggests that the policy was not motivated by a belief that prosecution of Plaintiffs for violating Utah's anti-bigamy statute would be improper, but instead was motivated by a desire to prevent this court from reaching the merits of Plaintiffs' claims. See *Harrell v. The Florida Bar*, 608 F.3d 1241, 1266 (11th Cir. 2010) (“[A] defendant’s cessation before receiving notice of a legal challenge weighs in favor of mootness, . . . while cessation that occurs late in the game will make a court more skeptical of voluntary changes that have been made.”) (internal quotation marks and citation omitted). Mr. Buhman’s strategic attempt to use the mootness doctrine to evade review in this case draws into question the sincerity of his contention that prosecution of Plaintiffs for violating this statute is unlikely to recur. See *cf. Harrell*, 608 F.3d at 1266 (“[W]here the circumstances surrounding the cessation suggest that the defendant is attempting to manipulate the court’s jurisdiction to insulate a favorable decision from review, courts will not deem a controversy moot.”); *DeJohn v. Temple Univ.*, 537 F.3d 301, 309-10 (3d Cir. 2008) (university policy change did not moot case where evidence suggested policy change was done for the strategic purpose of evading review).

The second factor weighs slightly, but not decisively, in favor of a finding of mootness in this case. Mr.

Buhman's motion to dismiss is supported by a formal declaration, made under the penalty of perjury, that the Utah County Attorney's office had adopted a formal policy of non-prosecution of Utah County residents that may be violating Utah's anti-bigamy statute without committing additional specified crimes. The declaration also expressly indicates that the criminal case opened against Plaintiffs for their alleged violation of the anti-bigamy statute has been closed and that no charges would be filed against them for bigamy in the absence of new evidence that Plaintiffs were committing any of the crimes specified in the policy. *See* Second Decl. of Jeffrey R. Buhman Ex. 1, 4, ¶ 12 (Dkt. No. 47). Because Mr. Buhman's declaration is made under the penalty of perjury, the court gives it more weight than it would a statement made in other circumstances. The failure to give public notice of the change in policy, however, adds to the concern that the action was taken primarily for purposes of this litigation.

It should be noted also that in his declaration and in the adopted policy itself, Mr. Buhman reserves the right to prosecute individuals for violating Utah's anti-bigamy statute "(1) [w]hen a victim is induced to marry through their partner's fraud, misrepresentations or omissions; or (2) [w]hen a person purports to marry or cohabits with another person in violation [of the Utah anti-bigamy statute] and is also engaged in some type of abuse, violence or fraud." Second Decl. of Jeffrey R. Buhman Ex. 1, 3, ¶ 9 (Dkt. No. 47). Furthermore, Mr. Buhman has conceded that the policy at issue "cannot bind the future actions or policies of successor Utah

County attorneys.” Mem. Supp. Mot. to Dismiss 5 (Dkt. No. 47). Even though Mr. Buhman’s adoption of a non-prosecution policy is supported by a formal declaration made under the penalty of perjury, the contents of the policy and the declaration leave open the possibility that Plaintiffs may be subject to prosecution for their continued violation of Utah’s anti-bigamy statute in the future. Moreover, the policy does not reject the ability of Utah County to prosecute under the anti-bigamy statute. It reflects, at most, an exercise of prosecutorial discretion by the current county attorney not to prosecute unless another crime is also included. The county attorney does not repudiate that punishment may be enhanced if a defendant were convicted under the anti-bigamy statute and another offense. *See Utah v. Holm*, 137 P.3d 726, 774 n.29 (Durham, CI, concurring in part and dissenting in part).

Like the first factor, the third factor identified by the Tenth Circuit in *Mink* weighs against a finding of mootness in this case. In both *Mink* and *Winsness*, the Tenth Circuit held that a prosecutor’s promise of non-prosecution was sufficient to meet the burden of showing that future prosecution was unlikely to occur because the promise of non-prosecution was based on a determination that controlling Supreme Court precedent would make prosecution under the challenged statute futile. In *Winsness*, for example, the prosecutors submitted an affidavit to the court indicating that the enforceability of the Utah flag abuse statute was doubtful in light of the Supreme Court’s decision in *Texas v. Johnson*, 491 U.S. 397, 420 (1989). 433 F.3d at

731. Similarly, in *Mink*, the prosecutor disclaimed an intent to prosecute the plaintiff after reviewing controlling Supreme Court precedent and concluding that prosecution would have been improper. 482 F.3d at 1254-55.

Mr. Buhman has not indicated what the reasoning is behind the newly adopted non-prosecution policy at issue in this case. His declaration merely states that, to his knowledge, this was the first occasion that the Utah County Attorney's office had to decide whether it would bring charges against someone in Plaintiffs' position for violating Utah's anti-bigamy statute and that, upon contemplation of the circumstances, a decision was made not to prosecute Plaintiffs and to implement a non-prosecution policy. The declaration does indicate that the policy is intended to "prevent the future prosecution in Utah County of bigamous marriages entered into for religious reasons," *see* Second Decl. of Jeffrey R. Buhman Ex.1, 3, ¶ 10 (Dkt. No. 47), but it does not explain why the office determined that such prosecutions should be avoided. Neither Mr. Buhman nor his counsel has cited any Supreme Court caselaw to show the court that the policy was necessary to avoid bringing an unconstitutional suit against Plaintiffs, and it is not clear what caselaw they would cite to show that such a prosecution would be futile.

Furthermore, Mr. Buhman's declaration clearly indicates that he believes the statute could be properly enforced, if the prosecutor exercises his discretion to do so, against an individual who violates Utah's anti-bigamy statute when the individual is also committing

some other crime specified in the policy. *See* Second Decl. of Jeffrey R. Buhman Ex.1, 3, ¶ 9 (Dkt. No. 47). He has also made no indication that he is abandoning his defense of the constitutionality of the challenged statute. Mr. Buhman's continued defense of the statute makes it difficult to conclude that there is no reasonable expectation that Plaintiffs would be prosecuted under the statute in the future. *See DeJohn*, 537 F.3d at 311 (“[H]ere Temple's timing of the policy change, as well as its continued defense of its former policy, do not meet the formidable burden of demonstrating that there is no reasonable expectation that it would reimplement its former policy.”) (internal quotation marks and citation omitted).

While it may be the case that Mr. Buhman believes that prosecution of Plaintiffs would be inappropriate in this circumstance, there is no reason to believe that such a determination is anything beyond an exercise of prosecutorial discretion that could be easily reversed in the future by a successor Utah County Attorney, or by Mr. Buhman himself, if he should change his mind. As a result, Mr. Buhman's adoption of the non-prosecution policy at issue in this matter is not sufficient to establish that future prosecution of Plaintiffs is unlikely to recur. Because Mr. Buhman has failed to meet his burden in this respect, the current case continues to be live for purposes of Article III jurisdiction.

II. PRUDENTIAL MOOTNESS

Even when a case is not moot in the “strict Article III sense,” the controversy may be “so attenuated that considerations of prudence and comity for coordinate branches of government counsel the court to stay its hand, and to withhold relief it has the power to grant.” *Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance v. Smith*, 110 F.3d 724, 727 (10th Cir. 1997). Prudential mootness has particular applicability where the relief being sought is an injunction against the government. *Id.* While the central inquiry is essentially the same under the Article III and prudential mootness doctrines – “have circumstances changed since the beginning of the litigation that forestall any occasion for meaningful relief,” *Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance*, 110 F.3d at 727 (citation omitted) – a remedial promise may be sufficient to bring a case to an end as a matter of equity, even if it may not be enough to kill a case constitutionally. *Winzler v. Toyota Motor Sales U.S.A., Inc.*, 681 F.3d 1208, 1211 (10th Cir. 2012).

A remedial commitment made by one of the “coordinate branches of the United States government” bears special gravity when determining whether to find a case prudentially moot. *Id.* at 1211. This is not only because government promises are generally trustworthy, but because “affording a judicial remedy on top of one already promised by a coordinate branch risks needless inter-branch disputes over the execution of the remedial process and the duplicative expenditure of finite public resources.” *Id.* Refusing to find a case prudentially moot when a government entity makes a

remedial commitment also discourages the other branches of government from seeking to resolve a dispute that is currently pending in court. *Id.*

In *Winzler*, the Tenth Circuit held that a products liability suit brought against Toyota was prudentially moot when Toyota voluntarily announced a nationwide recall to repair the problem alleged in the suit. According to the court, by initiating the recall, Toyota invoked a federally regulated² remedial scheme that provided the plaintiff with all the relief sought in the suit. The court held that because the remedy invoked by Toyota was enforced by a coordinate branch of the government, there was “not enough value left for the courts to add in this case to warrant carrying on with the business of deciding its merits.” *Id.* Allowing the case to go forward on the merits would duplicate the efforts of the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (“NHTSA”), waste finite public resources, and might “invite inter-branch confusion and turf battles over the details of carrying out an agreed objective.” *Id.*

The immediate case can easily be distinguished from the circumstances of the *Winzler* case. In *Winzler*, the remedial scheme Toyota invoked had been established long before the suit had ever been filed and gave

² The recall process was overseen by the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration, “an agency of the Department of Transportation that can issue stiff fines if the company fails to carry out the recall to its satisfaction.” *Winzler*, 681 F.3d at 1209.

the plaintiff all the relief she sought. The NHTSA recall scheme was not established to give specific relief to the specific plaintiff in the *Winzler* case, and it was not established with the specific purpose of allowing Toyota to evade court review. Instead, the recall scheme was specifically designed to provide the kind of relief that the plaintiff in *Winzler* sought, and when it was invoked, there was no additional relief that the court could grant.

In contrast, Mr. Buhman's non-prosecution policy was implemented more than eighteen months after the alleged conduct that gave rise to this suit occurred. As discussed above, the timing of the policy implementation, lack of any public notice, and lack of reasoning given for adopting the policy suggest that the policy was implemented, not to provide a remedy to Plaintiffs in this case, but instead to evade review of Plaintiffs' claims on the merits. Moreover, the policy implemented by Mr. Buhman does not provide Plaintiffs with all the relief they are seeking. It has already been established that the policy at issue is insufficient to alleviate the risk that Plaintiffs will be prosecuted or threatened with prosecution for their violation of Utah's anti-bigamy statute in the future. Plaintiffs are seeking a declaration from the court that the statute is unconstitutional and a permanent injunction against enforcing the statute against them "on the basis of their consensual plural family association." Civil Rights Complaint 39 (Dkt. No. 1). Plaintiffs are also seeking relief under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 for injury they

claim to have suffered because of threats of prosecution. The policy of Mr. Buhman's office falls far short of providing Plaintiffs with all the relief they seek.

Because this case can be easily distinguished from the circumstances in the *Winzler* case, and because the concerns presented to the court in *Winzler* are not sufficiently present in this case to warrant a finding of prudential mootness, the court will not rely on the prudential mootness doctrine to allow Mr. Buhman to evade review of the merits of Plaintiffs' claims.

CONCLUSION

For the reasons stated above, the court hereby DENIES Defendant Buhman's motion to dismiss on the grounds of mootness. (Dkt. No. 46). On July 2, 2012, the court issued a stay on further proceedings on Plaintiffs' motion for summary judgment and Defendant's cross-motion for summary judgment. (Dkt. No. 64). The stay is now LIFTED. Plaintiffs may, in their discretion, file a reply memorandum to Defendant's memorandum opposing Plaintiffs' motion for summary judgment on or before August 31, 2012. Plaintiffs should also file a memorandum opposing Defendant's cross-motion for summary judgment on or before September 14, 2012. Defendant may then, at his discretion, file a reply memorandum on or before September 28, 2012.

App. 80

DATED this 17th day of August, 2012.

BY THE COURT:

/s/ Clark Waddoups
Clark Waddoups
United States District
Court Judge

PUBLISH

**UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE TENTH CIRCUIT**

KODY BROWN;
MERI BROWN;
JANELLE BROWN;
CHRISTINE BROWN;
ROBYN SULLIVAN,

Plaintiffs-Appellees,

v.

JEFFREY R. BUHMAN,
Defendant-Appellant.

No. 14-4117
(D.C. No.
2:11-CV-00652-CW)
(D. Utah)

EAGLE FORUM EDUCATION
& LEGAL DEFENSE FUND;
SOUND CHOICES
COALITION, INC.;
CATO INSTITUTE,

Amici Curiae.

ORDER

(Filed May 13, 2016)

Before **MATHESON**, **BALDOCK**, and **MORITZ**, Cir-
cuit Judges.

This matter is before the court on the appellees' *Petition for Rehearing En Banc*. Upon consideration, any implicit request for panel rehearing is denied by the original panel members. For clarification, however, the panel has decided, *sua sponte*, to amend the original decision. A copy of the amended decision is attached to this order, and the clerk is directed to reissue the opinion nunc pro tunc to the original filing date.

The request for en banc rehearing and the amended opinion were also transmitted to all of the judges of the court who are in regular active service and who are not recused. As no member of the original panel or the en banc court requested that a poll be called, the petition for en banc review is denied.

Entered for the Court

/s/ Elisabeth A. Shumaker

ELISABETH A. SHUMAKER, Clerk
