

Highest Court Protects Faith-Based Initiative

The Supreme Court ruled Monday that an atheist foundation did not have a legal standing to challenge the use of taxpayer money to advertise and promote faith-based initiatives.



In what Christian observers are calling a victory for free speech, the Supreme Court ruled in a 5-4 decision that the atheist Freedom from Religion Foundation did not have a legal standing to challenge the use of taxpayer money to advertise and promote President George W. Bush's endorsement of faith-based initiatives. Monday's decision solidified Bush's faith-based initiatives, which helps religious organizations get federal funds for community projects. "This ruling is a win for the thousands of community and faith-based nonprofits all across the country that have partnered with government at all levels to serve their neighbors," Bush said in a written statement. "Most importantly, it is a win for the many whose lives have been lifted by the caring touch and compassionate hearts of these organizations." Jay Sekulow, chief counsel for the American Center for Law and Justice, said the decision sends "a powerful message that atheists and others antagonistic to religion do not get an automatic free pass to bring Establishment Clause lawsuits." The ruling may be a sign that the high court will be "less concerned about keeping church and state separate, so later decisions will be more sympathetic to government's cooperating with religious institutions," Tom Goldstein, a Harvard Law School lecturer on Supreme Court litigation, told the *Boston Globe*. The decision was one of three rulings conservative Christian lobbyists applauded yesterday. The court also ruled that the *Wisconsin Right to Life* should not have been barred from running pre-election advertising ads that mention a federal candidate and

that school officials can restrict drug-related speech at school functions, but did not extend that authority to other types of controversial speech, including religious expression.