

Professor Fights Back After Firing for Teaching Basic Biology

A conservative legal firm is defending a college professor who claims he was fired after university leaders found his teachings too “religious.”

First Liberty Institute recently sent a letter to St. Philip’s College in San Antonio, Texas, telling community college officials it was illegal and improper to terminate Dr. Johnson Varkey, a former adjunct professor who taught at the institution for nearly 20 years.

Calling Varkey’s views on science and gender “widely accepted biology,” Keisha Russell, counsel for First Liberty Institute, asked St. Philip’s College to reinstate the educator.

“The college violated Dr. Varkey’s constitutional and statutory rights when it fired him, and it must reinstate him immediately,” the June 20 letter proclaimed.

Varkey told CBN’s Faithwire the college informed him of an ethics complaint in January and terminated him just weeks later, purportedly without allowing him to learn the precise reason for his firing.

Furthermore, Varkey said he had no opportunity to offer any defense.

“On the 12th of January, I received an email from the vice president of the department of the school that they are doing an ethics violation investigation on me,” he said. “So, I responded to his email and asked him, ‘What are the complaints?’”

Varkey said he was told he would hear from human resources but

alleges no one contacted him until Jan. 27, when he was given a termination letter.

The professor, who taught more than 1,500 students about human biology since taking the position in 2003, was left to postulate about the root cause of his firing. In November, he told a class sex is determined by chromosomes X and Y, a biological fact.

A few students walked out of the classroom, leading him to ponder whether this was the catalyst of the complaints at the center of his termination.

Varkey's termination letter reportedly referenced grievances filed against him for "religious preaching, discriminatory comments about homosexuals and transgender individuals, anti-abortion rhetoric, and misogynistic banter."

But Varkey said he was "surprised and shocked" by his dismissal. He's been teaching the same realities about the human reproductive system for two decades, and this is reportedly the first time he has experienced a negative reaction.

"I've been teaching for that school for the last 20 years and without any complaints," he said. "So, I was shocked to see that letter."

Russell told CBN's Faithwire she and First Liberty decided to take the case for various reasons, but mainly found it compelling Varkey had been teaching for so long without incident. Beyond that, she said there is an understanding the case "probably has a lot to do with the new cultural trends on these issues."

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