

Smithsonian Apologizes for Booting Pro-Life Students

A Smithsonian museum has apologized to a group of Catholic students and their chaperones for reportedly asking the group to leave the National Air and Space Museum because group members were wearing blue caps with a pro-life message embroidered on them.

The apology comes after the American Center for Law and Justice filed a federal lawsuit against the museum last week on behalf of nine students and three parents.

According to the 20-page complaint, the students from Our Lady of the Rosary School in Greenville, South Carolina, were in Washington, D.C., to participate in the March for Life on Jan. 20. After the annual march, the group of students decided to visit the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum.

“Once in the [federal] museum, they were accosted several times and told they would be forced to leave unless they removed their pro-life hats. The group all wore the same blue hat that simply said, ‘Rosary PRO-LIFE.’ Other individuals in the museum were wearing hats of all kinds without issue,” according to the ACLJ.

“The museum staff mocked the students, called them expletives, and made comments that the museum was a ‘neutral zone’ where they could not express such statements. The employee who ultimately forced the students to leave the museum was rubbing his hands together in glee as they exited the building. We here at the ACLJ are absolutely appalled at this blatant discrimination and won’t let this behavior stand,” ACLJ Executive Director Jordan Sekulow said in a statement posted by the nonprofit law firm.

“It is clear that these Christian students were kicked out of the museum solely because of their pro-life and religious views. And the First Amendment *does* apply in a federal institution such as the Smithsonian,” Sekulow continued.

 “What the Smithsonian did is beyond reprehensible,” he said. “These were students simply wearing a hat that passively expressed their support for life on the basis of their Christian faith. The way these students, many of whom were minors, were treated by their federal government—the Smithsonian and its employees—should shock everyone to the core. It’s not only abhorrent; it’s blatantly unconstitutional. And that’s why we’re fighting back.”

As a federal entity, The Smithsonian Institution receives an endowment from the government that amounts to more than \$1 billion every year to operate its 21 museums, education and research centers.

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