

Atheist Loses Supreme Court Appeal Over Ill. Cross

An atheist has lost his final battle over an 11-story cross in Southern Illinois.

The U.S. Supreme Court rejected Robert Sherman's case against a \$20,000 state grant used to renovate the Bald Knob Cross of Peace Southeast of St. Louis.

Sherman first sued in August 2010. He argued that efforts to repair the cross using state money have "the primary effect of advancing a particular religious sect, namely Christianity."

Lower courts ruled Sherman lacked standing to sue the state. Sherman called the Supreme Court's ruling a "joke."

The court's "refusal to take my case means that any legislative (body), whether it be Congress, a state legislature or a municipal board, can make blatantly unconstitutional grants to advance religion simply by naming an executive branch agency as a middleman in the transaction," he charged.

D.W. Presley, president of the cross's board of directors, was pleased with the decision.

"In the grand scheme of things, while this is sensational news, this was just a small portion of what we've had going on in the last three years," Presley said. "The more important story is seeing the cross restored."

"(Sherman) used the legal process to the fullest extent, and there's nothing wrong with that," he added. "We're just glad it's over and behind us."