

DOJ Takes Action After County Discriminates Against Christian Church

The Department of Justice has filed a statement of interest in defense of a Christian Church in North Carolina after the Chatham County Board of Commissioners allegedly discriminated against its development.

According to the DOJ, the Summit Church-Homestead Heights Baptist Church met at East Chapel Hill High School for several years until it needed a larger space to meet.

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Summit Church claimed that it was treated “on less than equal terms to nonreligious assemblies” after it was denied a rezoning application. The church further argued it was discriminated against “on the basis of religion or religious denomination, and imposing an unreasonable limitation on the Church,” the filing reads.

The church then filed a motion for preliminary injunction, saying the county violated the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA), a federal law that protects individuals and religious institutions from “unduly burdensome, unequal, or discriminatory land use regulations,” the DOJ explained.

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In its statement defending the church, the DOJ wrote that it “respectfully urges the Court to find that Summit Church has standing in the instant matter and that its alleged injury is redressable with declaratory and injunctive relief and

damages.”

Assistant Attorney General Harmeet K. Dhillon of the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division said that the federal law “protects the rights of religious groups to exercise their faith free from the precise type of undue government interference exhibited here.”

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Dhillon noted that the DOJ’s civil rights division is “committed to defending religious liberties as our founders intended and as federal law requires.”

The DOJ’s involvement in the matter comes as Attorney General Pam Bondi declared that the “First Amendment isn’t just a line in the Constitution, it’s the cornerstone of our American liberty. It guarantees every citizen the right to speak freely, worship freely, and live according to their conscience without government interference.”

“Protecting Christians from bias is not favoritism, it’s upholding the rule of law and fulfilling the constitutional promise,” she said.

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