

‘Jesus’ War Memorial Wins Battle Against Atheists

A statue of Jesus will be allowed to remain as part of a World War II memorial in Montana after a federal judge dismissed a lawsuit seeking to remove it.

The American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ) filed an amicus brief, representing nearly 100,000 Americans and 18 members of Congress, to keep the Jesus statue on the Montana mountaintop. In dismissing the suit, filed by atheist group Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF), the court concluded the memorial did not violate the establishment clause and can remain in its place on Big Mountain.

“We are extremely pleased that the courts finally recognized the absurdity of this lawsuit,” says Jay Sekulow, chief counsel of the ACLJ. “Dismissing this case is not only a win for protecting the religious heritage and history of our nation, but for the soldiers and veterans of World War II. A memorial like this, created and placed on this mountain by the veterans themselves, deserves to remain there. It honors and commemorates the basic human rights that the FFRF manipulates to routinely counteract the rights of others, like the soldiers who fight for them.”

The atheist group filed the suit more than a year ago, calling the memorial “a ruse and a sham” and demanding the National Forest Service remove the display.

Part of a war memorial on Big Mountain at Whitefish Mountain Resort in Montana since the 1950s, the statue was inspired by monuments the soldiers—who were also members of the Knights of Columbus—saw in the mountains of Europe during the war.

“The statue does not convey to a reasonable, informed observer that the government, rather than a private party, endorses

Christianity over any other faith or the absence of faith," says U.S. District Court judge Dana L. Christensen. "The Court finds that the renewal of the special use permit does not constitute a government endorsement of a religious message and thus does not violate the establishment clause."