

School District Cracks Down on Evangelism Club

Liberty Counsel is presenting argument in federal court today to require an Indiana school district to grant Child Evangelism Fellowship (CEF) equal access to school facilities for the ministry's Good News Clubs. The case, Child Evangelism Fellowship of Indiana, Inc. v. Indiana Metropolitan School District of Pike Township, seeks to secure the same access and benefits for the Good News Clubs that non-religious groups currently enjoy.

In violation of the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution, the school district required CEF to pay facilities use fees for Good News Club meetings, while waiving the fees for similarly situated, non-religious groups. For nearly two school years, the school district ignored CEF's numerous attempts to resolve the constitutional violations, depriving Pike Township elementary students of the Good News Club's program, which CEF offers to all interested students free of charge.

Despite Liberty Counsel's lawsuit, the school district insists on continuing its discriminatory practice of charging CEF fees to use public school facilities that non-religious groups access at no charge. Leaving no question about its disdain for the Good News Club's Bible-based message, the district insisted that CEF must pay facilities use fees because otherwise the district might appear to sponsor a religious club, which might offend the sensibilities of some.

CEF has been encouraging learning, spiritual growth, moral development and service to others since 1937 and is actively expanding its ministry into new nations and new areas within nations, with a goal of reaching "Every Child, Every Nation, Every Day."

Horatio Mihet, Liberty Counsel's Vice President of Legal Affairs and Chief Litigation Counsel said, "Equal access is a simple concept. It means equal treatment in use of school facilities, including fee waivers, meeting times and announcement venues. Public schools cannot discriminate against clubs with Christian viewpoints while letting secular clubs speak on the same subjects. The Good News Club must be given the same access and benefits as the non-religious groups," said Mihet.