

School Principal Unconstitutionally Censors Guest Speaker of Student Club

Spanish River Community High School, in Boca Raton, Fla., engaged in unconstitutional viewpoint discrimination last week when it halted a student club meeting and led the speaker off campus.

Spanish River Community High School's American Club, a student-initiated, student-led club, hosted radio host Bradlee Dean at an after-school meeting of the club, while Sons of Liberty Radio (SOLR) covered the event. Despite being arranged with school, which had notified students of its occurrence for three weeks on PA system announcements, as well as through social media and posters, the school officials shut down Dean halfway through the event.

School officials, acting at the command of the principal, cited "controversial statements" and the "anti-homosexuality" of the group, "The Sons of Liberty," as the rationale for why they were not allowed to continue the program.

One school official stated that the Constitution doesn't apply to school property and that neither the club nor the speakers had any **First Amendment** rights. The principal then stated that actually the school just wasn't able to properly vet Dean and SOLR. The principal was contradicted by another official, who stated the school honestly hadn't vetted any of the other speakers.

As the guest speaker was escorted off campus, yet another official gave a parting shot which clearly illustrated that the denial was based on the speaker's viewpoint: "I warn you children—everything that [Bradlee Dean] is going to tell you is complete misinformation." These statements were captured on

video.

Liberty Counsel sent a letter, informing the school district that it had engaged in unconstitutional viewpoint discrimination, and demanded that the club's selected speaker be treated on an equal basis with all other approved speakers. The district, having had 24 hours to get its story straight, found a written policy (inconsistent with its past practice) and asked the club for compliance. The club has complied with this latest bureaucratic roadblock and has asked once again for approval.

"The alleged failure to vet the guest speaker is spurious," said Mathew Staver, founder and chairman of Liberty Counsel. "The extent of the vetting process for most other speakers was an introduction to the principal and a handshake, before they were led to the students assembled at the club speaking event. School officials involved in this incident censored Bradlee Dean because of allegations about his position on homosexuality. School officials crossed the line and violated the First Amendment," said Staver.