

Supreme Court Blocks Oklahoma's Religious Charter School

The Supreme Court ruled 4-4 that a religious charter school in Oklahoma cannot receive public funds.

The decision upheld the Oklahoma State Supreme Court's ruling that it would be unconstitutional for the St. Isidore of Seville Catholic Virtual School to receive such funding.

According to the ruling, "The judgment is affirmed by an equally divided Court." The document noted that Justice Barrett "took no part in the consideration or decision of these cases."

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Last month, the Oklahoma Parent Legislative Advocacy Coalition and a group of state taxpayers filed an amicus brief to the Supreme Court, arguing that the school's approval violates the Establishment Clause.

"The law is clear: Charter schools are public schools and must be secular and open to all students. The Oklahoma Supreme Court correctly found that the state's approval of a religious public charter school was unlawful and unconstitutional," the group said in a statement at the time. "We urge the U.S. Supreme Court to affirm that ruling and safeguard public education, church-state separation, and religious freedom for all."

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Oklahoma Attorney General Gentner Drummond celebrated the ruling, claiming it defends religious liberty by prohibiting

taxpayer funding of religiously-affiliated schools.

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Upon the Oklahoma Supreme Court ruling against the charter school in 2024, Drummond emphasized that the move was a “tremendous victory for religious liberty.”

“This decision is a tremendous victory for religious liberty. The framers of the U.S. Constitution and those who drafted Oklahoma’s Constitution clearly understood how best to protect religious freedom: by preventing the State from sponsoring any religion at all,” he said. “Now Oklahomans can be assured that our tax dollars will not fund the teachings of Sharia Law or even Satanism. While I understand that the Governor and other politicians are disappointed with this outcome, I hope that the people of Oklahoma can rejoice that they will not be compelled to fund radical religious schools that violate their faith.”

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“St. Isidore’s educational philosophy is to establish and operate the school as a Catholic school,” the 2024 ruling said. “Under both state and federal law, the State is not authorized to establish or fund St. Isidore.”

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