

Will the Supreme Court Come Rescue This Arizona Church's Sign?

The U.S. Supreme Court agreed on Tuesday to consider whether a town in Arizona discriminated against a local church by forcing it to remove signs notifying the public of its worship services.

The nine justices agreed to hear an appeal filed by the Good News Community Church, which objected to its treatment by town officials in Gilbert, Arizona.

The church, led by Pastor Clyde Reed, said the town's 2008 sign ordinance treated its religious messages differently than other types of signs. The ordinance has different categories, based on content, that determine the size of the sign, where it can be placed, and how long it can be displayed.

The church's signs were deemed to be event signs, which meant they received "far worse treatment" than other types, including those displaying political messages, its lawyers said.

The town's lawyers asked the court not to hear the case, in part because a new, less restrictive ordinance was enacted in 2011.

The Supreme Court will review a February 2013 ruling in which the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals rejected the church's challenge. The court said the town's treatment of different signs was not content-based.

Oral arguments and a ruling are due in the court's next term, which begins in October and ends in June 2015.

The case is Reed v. Gilbert, U.S. Supreme Court, No. 13-502.

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