

Christian Clubs Gain Equal Access to Public Schools

ORLANDO, FL, Nov. 6 /Christian Newswire/ -- Liberty Counsel has recently cleared the way for numerous Good News Clubs to use public school facilities for after-school programs. The Clubs, sponsored by Child Evangelism Fellowship (CEF), are designed to teach good character and Christian values to children ages 5-12. Supreme Court precedent requires that schools grant CEF the same access to school facilities as is granted to secular after-school programs. Liberty Counsel litigates when schools discriminate against CEF. Below are a few recent victories:

Los Angeles, California

Three schools within the Los Angeles Unified School District were blocking CEF clubs from meeting, with some even admitting that it was because CEF was religious. After pointing out such exclusion was against the district's own policy, California law, and the U.S. Constitution, the district smoothed out its approval procedure and cleared the way for three new clubs to start meeting at area schools. Liberty Counsel is no stranger to LAUSD. In 2003, Liberty Counsel entered into a court-approved settlement requiring the LAUSD to give equal access to the Christian Club free of charge and to pay the attorney's fees and costs for litigating this matter.

Palm Springs, California

After years of meeting in schools within the Palm Springs Unified School District, CEF was told that the district changed its policy and refused to distribute CEF's fliers because they promoted religion. Liberty Counsel wrote a letter explaining that the new policy was unconstitutional. After agreeing that the district's new policy needed revision, the district permitted the Good News Club's fliers to be distributed.

Temecula, California

Liberty Counsel helped the Inland Valley Chapter of CEF to obtain refunds of more than \$6,500 from two school districts that discriminated against CEF by charging higher fees than charged to other organizations. The Murrieta Valley Unified School District overcharged CEF by \$3,361.02 because CEF is religious. Now CEF can afford to provide club meetings to the children weekly instead of monthly. The Temecula Valley Unified School District permitted secular groups to meet without cost, but charged CEF \$3,246.09.

Valencia, California

The Newhall School District attempted to charge CEF for using the school when other non-profit groups used it without cost. When CEF's fee waiver was denied, Liberty Counsel sent a letter to the superintendent saying that the district could not discriminate against an organization for religious reasons. The superintendent then granted the club the same free access provided to other community groups.

Boise, Idaho

A Good News Club that was to start this Fall was suddenly cancelled by the superintendent of the Kamiah Unified School District, who refused to allow a religious club to meet or distribute announcements, citing "separation of church and state." Liberty Counsel contacted the District's attorney to explain that CEF must receive equal access. As a result, the superintendent allowed CEF to start the following week and to distribute fliers for the club.

Mathew D. Staver, Founder of Liberty Counsel and Dean of Liberty University School of Law, stated: "With each new school year school administrators have to re-learn First Amendment principles. Bible clubs and other religious groups are due the same access as secular groups when it comes to space, fees and flyer distribution."

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