

Primary Contact: Kassie Dulin, Direct: 972-941-4575, Cell: 214-542-4334, Email: kdulin@libertyinstitute.org



(Kountze Cheerleaders; photo courtesy of Liberty Institute)

TEXAS SUPREME COURT DECIDES IN FAVOR OF KOUNTZE CHEERLEADERS' IN BIBLE BANNER CASE

AUSTIN, TX, January 29, 2016 — Today, in an 8-0 decision, the Texas Supreme Court decided in favor of the Kountze Cheerleaders in the case of *Matthews v. Kountze Independent School District*. Gibson, Dunn, and Crutcher, LLP, Liberty Institute, and Beaumont attorney David Starnes represented the students, asking the Texas Supreme Court to protect the rights of all Texas students to free speech and religious liberty.

Read the court opinion: <http://www.txcourts.gov/media/1284936/140453.pdf>

Kelly Shackelford, President and CEO of Liberty Institute, says, “This is an 8-0 victory for the free speech and religious liberty rights of all Texas students. We are delighted that the court considered this case so straightforward that it did not even require oral argument. In light of today’s Supreme Court ruling, we hope the Court of Appeals will resolve this case permanently in the cheerleaders’ favor.”

James Ho, lead appellate counsel from Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher, LLP says, “At a time when religious liberty is under assault nationwide, this ruling is a welcome reminder that the Constitution protects people of faith—and a welcome rebuke to government agencies that try to play games with our rights.

Prerak Shah, co-lead counsel from Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher, LLP says, “We are profoundly grateful to the Texas Supreme Court for enforcing our legal rights, and to Senator Cornyn, Senator Cruz, Governor Abbott, and General Paxton for their leadership and for standing with the cheerleaders in their fight to protect the First Amendment.”

The case now returns to the Court of Appeals for the Ninth District in Beaumont, Texas.

Background

In 2012, a group of high school cheerleaders from Kountze, TX painted Bible verses on their run-through banners for school football games. The Freedom From Religion Foundation found out about the banners and filed a complaint with Kountze ISD (KISD). In response, the school district banned the cheerleaders’ signs. KISD claims the banners are government speech, which they can censor at will, while the cheerleaders’ attorneys contend that the banners are the cheerleaders’ private speech, which is protected under Texas law.

Gibson, Dunn, and Crutcher, LLP, Liberty Institute, and Beaumont attorney David Starnes represented the students. The attorneys won a Texas Supreme Court victory that advances the fight for religious liberty in schools.

Read more about the case at libertyinstitute.org/kountze

About Liberty Institute

[Liberty Institute](http://libertyinstitute.org) is the largest nonprofit legal organization in the nation dedicated solely to defending religious liberty in America. Liberty Institute defends religious freedom for all.

To arrange an interview on this case, contact Kassie Dulin, Director of Legal Communications. Email: kdulin@libertyinstitute.org, Direct: 972-941-9575, Cell: 214-542-4334.