



Press Statement

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Contact: Lacey McNiel, media@firstliberty.org

Cell: 972-989-2403, Direct: 972-941-4453

Three-Judge Panel Says No “Substantial Burden” to Ban Christian School from Michigan Township

Judges on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit Reject Christian school’s appeal

June 2, 2017—A three-judge panel of the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit concluded Friday that a Michigan Township can forbid religious schools, specifically First Liberty Institute’s client Livingston Christian School, from moving into its city. A copy of the opinion is available [here](#).

“This precedent is very dangerous. It states that it is not a burden on religious exercise for a city to ban religious schools, churches, synagogues or mosques from moving into town. In fact, if a city wanted to ban a specific synagogue or mosque from moving into its city limits, the court held such a ban would not be a substantial burden on religious exercise. This is shocking and cannot be allowed to stand,” says Hiram Sasser, Deputy Chief Counsel of First Liberty. “Towns who use their zoning laws to keep religious schools and organizations out of their backyard violate federal law and the First Amendment.”

Livingston Christian School first brought a lawsuit in a federal court in Michigan in an effort to protect its right to exist as a ministry in Genoa Township. They sued the Township under the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA), arguing that the Township’s actions substantially burdened the school’s ability to operate as a religious ministry. After arguments at the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit in April of 2017, the three judges of the Sixth Circuit concluded that the Township’s ban did not present a “substantial burden” on the free exercise of religion of Livingston Christian School.

To read more about First Liberty’s clients, visit: FirstLiberty.org.

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About First Liberty Institute

[First Liberty Institute](#) is the largest legal organization in the nation dedicated exclusively to defending religious freedom for all Americans.

To arrange an interview, contact Lacey McNiel at media@firstliberty.org or by calling 972-941-4453.