



Press Statement
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Texas Supreme Court: Cheerleaders Win Again!

Court rejects the Kountze ISD latest attack on cheerleader's freedom to have Bible verses on run-through banners

Austin, TX—The Texas Supreme Court today denied to hear the Kountze Independent School District's appeal of an earlier decision protecting the right of cheerleaders in that district to have Bible verses on run-through banners. Lead appellate counsel Allyson Ho of Gibson, Dunn, and Crutcher, LLP, First Liberty Institute, and lead trial counsel, Beaumont attorney David Starnes, represented the students after the Kountze Independent School District superintendent banned all religious banners from the high school football field starting in 2012. In 2015, Senators Cornyn and Cruz filed an amicus brief in support of the cheerleaders in the Supreme Court of Texas, as did Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton.

Hiram Sasser, one of the attorneys for the cheerleaders and General Counsel to First Liberty, released the following statement on today's announcement by the court:

After more than five years of litigation, our clients are relieved that the Texas Supreme Court has brought an end to the school district's scorched earth litigation tactics. As the football season kicks off across Texas, it's good to be reminded that these cheerleaders have a right to have religious speech on their run through banners—banners on which the cheerleaders painted messages they chose, with paint they paid for, on paper they purchased. School districts everywhere should learn an important lesson from this failed litigation by the Kountze Independent School District: stop harassing cheerleaders and accept that they are free to have religious speech on their run through banners.

"This is a total victory that protects the religious liberty of students everywhere," said Allyson Ho of Gibson, Dunn, and Crutcher, LLP, and lead appellate counsel. "This decision by the Supreme Court of Texas should be the final word on this issue for students and schools across Texas."

"No school district should be able to censor, ban, or claim ownership of the private religious speech of its students," Beaumont attorney and co-counsel for the cheerleaders David Starnes said. "Hopefully this will prevent Kountze ISD from spending another dollar on attorneys intent on filing yet another frivolous legal attack on cheerleaders."

To read more, go to FirstLiberty.org/Kountze.

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About First Liberty Institute

[First Liberty Institute](http://FirstLiberty.org) 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.