



News Release

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ELEVENTH CIRCUIT REVERSES DECISION BARRING CHRISTIAN SCHOOL FROM PRAYING OVER LOUDSPEAKER

First Liberty Institute appealed lower court ruling on behalf of Cambridge Christian School that prohibited prayer before game

ATLANTA, Ga.—Today, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit [reversed](#) in part a lower court’s decision that affirmed a Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA) rule prohibiting two Christian schools from praying over the loudspeaker prior to a state championship game. In today’s decision, the Eleventh Circuit ruled that Cambridge Christian School’s argument that its free speech and free exercise rights were violated have merit and should proceed.

“We are grateful to have won this appeal and look forward to presenting our case on behalf of Cambridge Christian School to the district court,” said Jeremy Dys, Special Counsel for Litigation and Communications at First Liberty. “The First Amendment protects the rights of students and teachers at a private Christian school to pray before a football game, especially when both teams are Christian and have a tradition of prayer before games.”

In 2015, the Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA) forbade First Liberty Institute client Cambridge Christian School (CCS) from praying over the loudspeaker at the Citrus Bowl ahead of the state championship football game. The FHSAA suggested that because the stadium was city-owned and the FHSAA a state agency, it would violate the Constitution to allow two private Christian schools to pray over a state-owned microphone for less than a minute.

In February 2017, a federal district judge sided with the FHSAA. First Liberty Institute appealed to the Eleventh Circuit, arguing that the First Amendment protects the rights of students and teachers at a private Christian school to pray before a football game, especially when both teams are a Christian and have a tradition of prayer before games.

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About First Liberty Institute

[First Liberty Institute](#) is a non-profit public interest law firm and 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.