



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on August 8, 2012

Legal Group Warns Against Attempts to Boot Chick-fil-A From Universities

As Chick-fil-A basks in the afterglow of appreciation expressed by hundreds of thousands of Americans over its commitment to Christian values and traditional marriage, homosexual activists and their supporters continue their efforts to banish the restaurant chain from universities across the nation. To counter those efforts, [Alliance Defending Freedom](#) (ADF), a conservative legal advocacy group, has sent letters to five universities where activists are pressing to have the restaurant thrown off campus, urging its administrators to resist such attempts.



While ADF emphasized that it was not representing Chick-fil-A, in a press release it said it was sending the letters “on behalf of students, faculty, and organizations who share the same religious beliefs as Chick-fil-A and who often face similar threats of religious discrimination.”

Homosexual activist groups were especially incensed by [comments made by Chick-fil-A president Dan Cathy](#) in July, when he told a Baptist publication that his company is committed to strengthening traditional marriage. In a separate interview he told a nationally syndicated radio program that America was in danger of God’s judgment for its arrogant and anti-Christian embrace of same-sex marriage. As is now well-known, the resulting boycott that “gay” activists called against Chick-fil-A backfired, giving the company a record-setting day of sales on the August 1 Chick-fil-A Appreciation Day that former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee called to counter the boycott.

But that hasn’t stopped activists from continuing their hate campaign, with the restaurant chain targeted for elimination at five universities: West Virginia University, New York University, University of Southern Mississippi, University of Kansas, and the University of Louisville. It is to the administrators of those schools that ADF addressed its letters, asking the officials to hold the line on such attempts to trample the First Amendment’s guarantee of free speech.

“Every American should be free to live and do business according to their faith,” explained ADF attorney Matt Sharp in the press release. “The First Amendment protects Chick-fil-A’s right and its president’s right to express their opinions on marriage and other political and social issues. Any retaliation against Chick-fil-A or its president based on their speech is a violation of federal law.”

In the letters to the schools, Sharp and fellow ADF attorney David Cortman emphasized that the “vitriol directed against Chick-fil-A is based solely upon the recent statements by Chick-fil-A President Dan Cathy that ‘we are very much supportive of the family — the biblical definition of the family unit.’ But Mr. Cathy’s statement — which is an opinion shared by the majority of Americans — is no less protected than those made by business leaders from other companies who have expressed a different opinion upon the issue of same-sex ‘marriage.’”

The attorneys explained to the administrators that “no matter whether Chick-fil-A has a permit to operate a restaurant on your university’s campus, is leasing space in the food court, or is considered an



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independent contractor providing food service on behalf of the university, the First Amendment protects the company from retaliation based on its protected speech.... Not only would discriminating against Chick-fil-A be a clear violation of the First Amendment and expose the University to legal liability, but it would undermine the very lessons of free speech and tolerance that the University seeks to teach to its student body.”

As reported by [The New American](#), Chick-fil-A has already been targeted on various university campuses for its longtime promotion of traditional family values. Last March a small group of students at Boston’s Northeastern University succeeded in blocking Chick-fil-A from opening a franchise on the school’s campus after complaints that the company financially supports organizations that have an “anti-gay” bias. The student body as a whole had given its okay to a proposal for the restaurant chain to become a vendor in the student center, until a small contingent of students complained about the various groups the company supports through its [WinShape Foundation](#). Led by student Taylor Cotter, a member of the school’s student Senate, the opposing students circulated a petition, gathering some 300 signatures — about 1.5 percent of the student body. “Despite the relatively small opposition, the Student Government Association (SGA) voted 31-5 not to allow Chick-fil-A to become a campus vendor in the school’s recently renovated food court,” reported *The New American*.”

Northeastern’s Graduate Student Government, which joined the undergraduate student government in rejecting the franchise, released a statement explaining that because of “Chick-fil-A’s financial support for groups advocating against gay rights and gay marriage, [we felt] that it was not appropriate to invite Chick-fil-A onto campus ... because it contradicts Northeastern’s values and standards with respect to diversity and the University’s commitment to its LGBT community.... It is not in the interest of the University to allow onto campus a vendor associated with these beliefs.”

It didn’t take long for officials of Northeastern University, which had pursued the addition of Chick-fil-A to the restaurants represented at its student center, to align its opinion with that of the small group of students leading the campaign, claiming that the restaurant chain’s values contradicted the school’s respect for diversity and support for the homosexual community. In a statement the officials declared that they were “proud of the decision” made by the student government body to reject Chick-fil-A, saying that it “affirms our university’s commitment to be an inclusive, diverse community that is respectful of all.”

In its own statement, Chick-fil-A said that the university’s decision was “hasty” and “unfortunately based on one side of misinterpreted reports.” It added that the company “did not have an adequate opportunity to speak to the circumstances on the Northeastern campus with greater clarity and correction.” The company emphasized that the “most important thing we need to confirm is that we are not anti-anybody and Chick-fil-A has no agenda, policy, or position against anyone as some reports continue to represent.”

The statement added that the company’s agenda “is simple: to graciously serve great food and have a positive influence on all who come in contact with Chick-fil-A. This is the reason why we were initially invited to the campus. Remember that the student governing body had [previously] overwhelmingly selected the Chick-fil-A brand as an addition to its campus restaurant offerings.”

Northeastern and the five universities to which ADF sent letters are not the only schools where a minority of students have mounted campaigns against Chick-fil-A’s presence at their schools. The restaurant chain has also been targeted at Duke University, Bowling Green University, Florida Gulf Coast University, Gainesville State College, Indiana University-South Bend, Texas Tech University, and the University of North Texas.



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