



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on May 12, 2016

Religious Liberty Victory in Oklahoma

With religious liberty increasingly under assault in the United States, it is encouraging when Christians can chalk up a victory. This time, a victory was won without having to resort to a court case.

In March, Paul Blair, the pastor of the Fairview Baptist Church in Edmond, Oklahoma (an Oklahoma City suburb), was driven off the Oklahoma City campus of Oklahoma State University, along with John Michener, a ministry director for the pro-life group Oklahomans United for Life (OUFL).



According to Blair, it is common for the OUFL to visit college campuses and “engage” students about the issue of life. Michener said they were to speak with students at OSU-OKC about “life and the political issues facing Oklahoma.”

They were banned, with OSU officials claiming the ban resulted because the groups that Blair and Michener represent are religious organizations!

Blair was a standout player at Oklahoma State in his college days, before going on to play pro football with the Chicago Bears. After a successful career in the NFL, Blair entered the ministry.

After the ban, Blair and Michener contacted First Liberty, a legal organization that specializes in cases that involve questions of religious liberty. “We are so thankful for First Liberty and the crack legal team they have there,” Blair said. “They were able to assist us immediately by phone, and then come up with us and we paid a personal visit to Oklahoma State University, and were able to get the issue resolved.”

First Liberty Institute attorneys were able to persuade the officials at OSU to lift the ban, allowing the pro-life group on all of the campuses of OSU. OSU is the largest university system in the state, with more than 35,000 students. First Liberty Senior Counsel Mike Berry praised OSU’s officials for doing the right thing. “As soon as we alerted OSU’s general counsel that they had stepped on the religious liberty rights of Paul’s pro-life ministry, they were willing to work with us to set everything right,” Berry said. “Oklahomans United for Life and other ministries are now free to visit all OSU campuses, and we didn’t even have to go to court.”

Some past victories of First Liberty include obtaining the restoration of the rights of NASA employees to use the name “Jesus” in an employee e-newsletter. That case also was settled without going to court, after NASA’s legal team was informed of the law pertaining to the free expression of religion. Another victory was achieved when a high-school student was banned from forming a Christian club on her campus. A letter from First Liberty was sufficient to get the ban lifted.

Unfortunately, Christians do not always win these disputes. Florists, pharmacists, and bakers have all been informed that they are expected to ditch their religious views when their beliefs run counter to potential clients’ wishes, such as when bakers are forced to bake cakes for same-sex weddings, or druggists are forced to sell abortion-causing drugs.



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Berry said that we must stand up for our freedom: “If your rights are violated and you stand up by calling First Liberty, you’re not just protecting your own religious freedom — but all Americans’ freedom. Standing up for religious freedom won’t automatically cause a lawsuit. It’s possible than any issue can be resolved by simply standing one’s ground and informing people of the law.” As it did in the case in Oklahoma.

Michener, who also leads the Oklahoma Conservative Political Action Committee (OCPAC), reported the results of the victory: “We were able to visit campus, we were able to share the Gospel, we were able to talk about life [the case against abortion]. And were welcomed there by the administration.”

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