



First Amendment Triumphs in Settlement With School Board

Arizona Christian University (ACU) President Len Munsil celebrated the [settlement](#) of a lawsuit his attorneys filed against the Washington Elementary School District (WESD). Appropriately, the settlement was announced on May 4, the National Day of Prayer.

Exulted Munsil:

This is a complete vindication of the rights of our students to be able to participate as student-teachers in a public school district without fear of religious discrimination.

We obtained everything we wanted in this new agreement, without any sacrifice or compromise to our beliefs and our university's religious purpose.

We look forward to a continued beneficial partnership that serves ACU student-teachers and the students, faculty, and staff of the WESD.



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The lawsuit was filed after leftists on the school board had discovered, to their horror, that for 11 years the district had a close working agreement and relationship with ACU. Students were invited to shadow teachers in the district's schools, often taking over part of the classes to relieve full-time teachers at a time when the schools were short-staffed. And they served without pay.

Both the district and the ACU students benefited. For 11 years there were no complaints. In fact, the district often would hire ACU students upon graduation, based upon their outstanding performance as volunteers.

All that changed in February, as noted in our [article](#) that covered the issue back in March:

The point person on the board who first discovered that ACU had values directly opposed to her own, Tamilia Valenzuela, calls herself a "bilingual, disabled, neurodivergent Queer Black Latina." As the renewal of the long-standing agreement with ACU was being discussed, she opened the bidding with this:

Our vision in Washington Elementary School District is committed to achieving excellence for every child, every day, every opportunity. Every child.

When I go to Arizona Christian University's website, and I'm taking this directly from their



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website, “above all else be committed to Jesus Christ accomplishing His will in advancing His kingdom on Earth as in heaven.”

Part of *their* values, is “influence, engage and transform the culture with Truth by promoting the biblically informed values that are foundational to Western civilization, including the centrality of family, traditional sexual morality, and lifelong marriage between *one man and one woman*.” [Emphasis in original.]

Valenzuela continued:

Because if we’re bringing people in whose mission [is to] “above all else ... influence people to be biblically minded,” how does that hold space for people of other faiths[,] our members of the LGBT community[, or] people who think differently and do not have the same beliefs?

At some point we need to get real with ourselves and take a look at who we’re making legal contracts with and the message that that is sending to our community.

Because that makes me feel like I could not be safe in this in this school district.

That makes other queer kids, who are already facing attack from our lawmakers that they could not be safe in this community.

So I really want us to think hard about who we’re partnering with deep dive and I want to ask the district, “is this school value aligned with what we’re trying to do and making sure that all of our students feel safe?”

She was not alone. Board president Nikkie Gomez-Whaley added:

When I went and looked into not only [Arizona Christian’s] core values but then the statement of faith that they ask their students to sign and live by, what gave me pause was it’s not just teaching but it’s teaching as they say um, with a Biblical lens, with a proselytizing is embedded into how they teach, and um, you know, I just don’t believe that that belongs in schools and I would never want uh you know my son to talk about his two dads and be shamed by a teacher who believed a certain way and is at a school that demands that they uh, you know uh, teach through God’s ... their biblical lens.

David Cortman, Senior Counsel for Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), which assisted the university in bringing its lawsuit, explained:

By discriminating against Arizona Christian University and denying it an opportunity to participate in the student-teacher program because of its religious status and beliefs, the school district was in blatant violation of the U.S. Constitution, not to mention state law that protects ACU’s religious freedom.

The district and the members of the school board got off easy. As part of the settlement, they had to pay ADF’s legal fees in exchange for the promise that ADF wouldn’t file further charges against them.

ACU now has a new agreement virtually identical to the one the board canceled back in February, but with this additional proviso: ADF attorneys will be reviewing the annual renewal of that agreement by



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the board to ensure that they don't try to pull another stunt like this in the future.

Related article:

[Queer School Board Ends Agreement With Arizona Christian University Over Its Christian Worldview](#)



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