



townhall.com
NEWS. OPINION. ACTION.

California Tells Christian Club it Must Admit Non-Christians and Homosexuals

By Brendan Steinhauser

Jan 2, 2006

A new Christian club at California State University--San Bernardino was recently denied official recognition by the university because it required its members to adhere to Biblical principles of morality. Some of these principles, as explained by the student organizer, Ryan Sorba, include abstaining from premarital sex and homosexual relations. Sorba says that in order to join his Christian group, a student must adhere to the teachings of Jesus Christ and strive to avoid sinful behavior.

According to Cal-State San Bernardino President Albert Karnig, these membership restrictions violate Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations. This law states, "No campus shall recognize a student organization which discriminates on the basis of race, religion, national origin, ethnicity, color, age, gender, martial status, citizenship, sexual orientation, or disability."

Ostensibly, this law prevents discrimination and creates a more inclusive campus community. Students are prevented from hurting each others' feelings since they cannot exclude each other from groups on a myriad of personal characteristics. While it is unfair for someone to be discriminated against because of something they cannot control, like a disability, it is ludicrous that the same anti-discrimination law should apply when it comes to personal beliefs and behavior, which students can control. Students choose their religious convictions with their own free will, and can decide to convert if they change their mind.

However, the state of California does not share this reasoning. Apparently California believes that it would be unfair for a student to be excluded from an ideological organization, even if that student does not agree with the teachings of the ideology.

The effect of this law is that it would prevent a Catholic student organization from denying membership to a Southern Baptist. It would prevent a Muslim student association from denying membership to a Hindu.

What, then, would be the point of joining a religious organization? Would you pray with people in your club who believe in a different deity? Just as Catholics do not attend Synagogues and Buddhists do not frequent mosques, there would be no point for non-Christians to join a Christian student group.

If students are forced to allow people who have fundamental disagreements about existence and morality into their club, how could the members ever accomplish their goals of praying together and promoting their beliefs?

Religious freedom is vital to a free society, and college campuses are supposed to be beacons of academic inquiry and philosophical discourse. How can universities serve this purpose when governments make it illegal for universities to recognize religious groups that expect their members to adhere to the basic tenets of their religion?

The simple answer is that universities cannot achieve this purpose when they must enforce such an appalling and unconstitutional law, which is overtly hostile to religious freedom.

To find out how you can help Ryan and his club gain recognizance by the California State system, contact [The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education](#).

You can also write President Karnig and let him know how you feel about the situation. His email address is akarnig@csusb.edu and his phone number is 909-537-5002.

Find this story at: <http://www.townhall.com/opinion/columns/BrendanSteinhauser/2006/01/02/180786.html>