



Focus on Religious Freedom

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Teachers Retain Personal Freedom of Religion in Public Schools

A teacher's strong faith and courage are being tested now that a small, personal crucifix on her desk for ten years is suddenly unacceptable to her employer. Marisol Arroyo-Cortez was unexpectedly called to meet with her vice-principal and a union representative because of "concern" over the crucifix.

The teacher was told she must remove the cross because it was an expression of her faith and did not belong in the classroom. When she explained that the cross was an important part of her faith in her every day life and gave her comfort and encouragement throughout her day, she was offered an unacceptable compromise of putting the crucifix in a drawer or displaying it under her desk so students could not see it. A few days later she was put on leave.

Arroyo-Cortez reached out to First Liberty attorneys who defend religious freedom cases and Keisha Russell, a senior counsel, stated that it is a violation of the 1st Amendment freedom of speech and freedom of religion to require a teacher to clear their personal space of anything religious. Russell referred to the Supreme Court decision re Coach Kennedy v. Bremerton School District which said the coach could not be deprived by his school employer of his right to personal prayer simply because his prayer could be seen by students and the public.

Commenting as the Coach Kennedy decision was released, Justice Gorsuch said that the Constitution does not mandate nor tolerate shutting down personal religious expression.

Protecting and asserting the religious freedom of students and teachers in America's public schools is critical to young Americans. Their heritage of liberty includes the understanding and experience of the inalienable right to chose their faith and express it openly. Assure them their freedom of religion and speech is declared and enshrined in our founding documents.

Read more here:

<https://tinyurl.com/4srp24e3> <https://tinyurl.com/nzsv27e5> <https://tinyurl.com/nfvwwxmd>

Watch 9 minute video demonstrating the Dept. of Education's list of students' rights to live their faith in public schools at www.cffor.org