

The *Arizona Christian University* Case

Case Name: Arizona Christian University v. Washington Elementary School District

Case Status: Case dismissed by the District Court of Arizona after a settlement was reached on May 3, 2023.

Significance: Whether a school board may terminate a relationship with a university based on the university's religious status and beliefs.



Background: Arizona Christian University has enjoyed a positive, eleven-year relationship with the Washington Elementary School District. On February 23, a school board member claimed that even the presence of ACU student-teachers made her feel “unsafe” simply based on ACU’s religious beliefs. All five school board members voted unanimously to abruptly terminate the district’s relationship with ACU because of the university’s religious beliefs on biblical marriage and sexuality, even though no complaints had been made about an Arizona Christian student or alumnus. The government cannot show hostility towards people for their religious beliefs. ADF filed a lawsuit against the district and school board members because they cannot discriminate against anyone due to their religious beliefs. Two months after ADF filed, the defendants agreed to a settlement in which the district reinstated the contract with Arizona Christian University and paid \$25,000 in attorneys’ fees.

Key Points

- The government cannot show hostility towards people for their religious beliefs.
- The First Amendment provides a protection for the ACU student-teachers, and the school board should not discriminate against the students for their convictions.
- Arizona Christian University student-teachers should have the same rights as every other university’s students.

Key Facts

- Students from ACU have consistently provided excellent service to students in the Washington Elementary School District.
- ACU has received zero complaints about an ACU student teacher or alumnus on these issues.

The Bottom Line: Students should not lose opportunities and be punished because of their religious beliefs, nor may the government treat people of faith worse than everyone else.