



## **FACT SHEET**

### ***Bronx Household of Faith v. Board of Education for the City of New York***

#### ***ABOUT Bronx Household of Faith v. Board of Education for the City of New York***

The Bronx Household of Faith is an inner-city New York City church that sought to rent a public school building on Sundays to hold its weekly worship service but had its request rejected by the New York City Board of Education. This led to a nearly 18-year legal battle in the federal court system to secure equal access to public facilities not only for Bronx Household of Faith, but for other churches and faith groups as well. Attorney Jordan Lorence filed suit on behalf of the church in 1994 to secure the same access to public facilities that other groups enjoyed. The church eventually lost at the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 2nd Circuit. In 2001, in the majority opinion of *Good News Club v. Milford Central Schools*, Associate Justice Clarence Thomas implied that the earlier *Bronx* decision had been decided wrongly. Lorence then filed a new suit on the church's behalf, which resulted in a reversal of the previous decision by the federal district court in 2003. The Board of Education has subsequently filed appeals on various issues, which eventually resulted in the federal district court issuing a permanent injunction in November 2007 allowing Bronx Household of Faith and other faith groups to meet in school buildings on weekends for worship services. The board of education appealed that decision to the 2nd Circuit, which reversed the permanent injunction. The Supreme Court then declined to review the case. Subsequently, Alliance Defending Freedom attorneys filed a new lawsuit on different constitutional grounds, and the district court issued a new permanent injunction that again allows worship services to be held in public school buildings. The city has appealed to the 2nd Circuit.

#### ***CURRENT STATUS OF Bronx Household of Faith v. Board of Education AS OF 11/16/12***

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 2nd Circuit will hear oral arguments in the case on Nov. 19.

#### ***WHAT IS AT STAKE?***

- The freedom of churches and religious organizations to meet in vacant public buildings on the same terms and conditions as all other groups.
  - When religious freedom wins, everyone wins. Church members can provide help to their neighbors and the hope that their communities need in the form of essential spiritual and social services.
  - When government officials can single out churches and religious organizations and their worship services for exclusion instead of permitting them to meet them as they do other groups, they are removing a valuable source of social good and silencing people of faith.
- The ability of churches to continue ministering to those in need in their communities.
  - New York City cannot duplicate the generous help the churches and other religious groups provide their neighbors.
  - Every church the city evicts cuts off or limits help and support for the neediest people.

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#### ***ABOUT Alliance Defending Freedom***

Alliance Defending Freedom (formerly Alliance Defense Fund) is an alliance-building legal ministry that advocates for the right of people to freely live out their faith.

#### ***ABOUT Jordan Lorence***

Jordan Lorence serves as senior counsel for Alliance Defending Freedom at its Washington, D.C., Regional Service Center. He has litigated religious liberty, free speech, and marriage cases across the nation since 1984. Lorence earned a J.D. from the University of Minnesota Law School in 1980. He is admitted to the bar in three states, the U.S. Supreme Court, and multiple federal courts.

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