



SPEECH FIRST

Speech First Wins in U.S. Court of Appeals for The Tenth Circuit Against Oklahoma State University

[Denver, CO \(February 9, 2024\)](#) – [Today the Tenth Circuit ruled in favor](#) of Speech First against Oklahoma State University (OSU). This comes after Speech First appealed its case against OSU to the Tenth Circuit following a dismissal by the District Court for the Western District of Oklahoma for a lack of standing due to the fact that Speech First uses pseudonyms to identify its members rather than their legal names. Per all of Speech First’s lawsuits on behalf of its members, the legal names of the plaintiffs are kept out of the court documents in order to protect students from potential retaliation from their schools. Students who stand up against the university that is violating their rights requires courage, but this action does not eliminate the threat of reprisal that still exists while these students remain on campus and attend classes. In fact, it could amplify this threat. Speech First has a duty to protect the identities of its student members.

Five amicus briefs were submitted in support of the appeal. This case was of interest to a wide range of groups and membership organizations that wished to exercise their right to protect the identities of their members. Briefs were submitted by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the US Chamber of Commerce, CatholicVote.org, Young America's Foundation, Manhattan Institute, and the Independent Women's Law Center. The number of amicus briefs from such a diverse set of organizations is a testament to how important the membership-organization issue is across the country. Speech First is leading the charge to not only vindicate students' free-speech rights but also their right of freedom of association.

[Cherise Trump](#), Executive Director of Speech First, issued the following statement:

“Speech First’s lawsuits represent college students who already fear retaliation and discipline by their universities for merely expressing their viewpoints. If they have enough reason to believe their universities will come after them for their political opinions, then of course they have every reason to fear reprisal if they are involved in an active lawsuit against their school’s leadership. OSU attempted to use our students’ fear against them by getting the case dismissed because we would not use their legal names. Well, today, the Tenth Circuit has agreed that our students’ concerns for the protection of their identities are valid. Our members’ anonymity is beyond important; without it, students would be left open to the whims of authoritarian college administrators or faculty who are determined to censor, compel, and coerce student speech. Now we can get back to directly challenging OSU’s insidious policies that investigate, track, and discipline students for their constitutionally protected speech. We have won a number of battles against colleges who choose to violate students’ speech rights and will continue to do so.”

To schedule an engagement with Speech First, please contact Michael Hensley at Michael@athospr.com and info@athospr.com.

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