



Supreme Court rules in favor of football coach who prayed on field after games

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WASHINGTON (TND) — Arguments over the act of prayer on a public school football field went all the way to the Supreme Court, resulting in another controversial conservative 6-3 ruling.

Man accused of stealing, killing dog

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It's one that could fundamentally change the way religious expression is treated in schools.

The court decided a Washington State high school coach who lost his job because he insisted on praying on the football field after games has the right to do so. Some wonder if this will prompt even more high-profile challenges.

“I found out that I am not insane. It is absolutely true—all the facts of the case and it is just good to know that the First Amendment is alive and well,” said Joe Kennedy, the former coach who’s been at the center of the legal battle for roughly seven years.

Critics insist that Kennedy, by publicly praying on the field after games either directly or indirectly, pressured students to join, therefore infringing on their religious freedoms.

“If he takes the knee, they will take the knee. If he prays on the 50-yard line, a powerful symbol in a powerful place, they will do the same,” argued Rev. Kathleen Kingsley of St Paul’s Episcopal Church during the court battle.

Experts say it could spark even more debate.

“As long as we've had public schools, we've had battles about what religion is in the public schools, and that started with battles about the bible,” said Neal McCluskey, at the CATO Institute’s Center for Educational Freedom. “Public schools are going to be increasingly contentious places when it comes to how people can exercise their religious beliefs—how they can express their religion.”

This ruling came just days after another ordered the state of Maine to pay tuition for students who live far from public schools to instead attend private schools, even if those schools are religious.

The feud over prayer and the First Amendment could have even more implications.

“His case ended up being bigger because it protected so many other people,” Kennedy’s attorney said Monday. “I think it's going to provide a lot of protections for a lot of Americans under the first amendment.”

While some see protections, others see a further blurring of the lines between the separation of church and state.

“This case probably opens the door for more fights, not that we were in a state where there wasn't already a lot of fighting before this,” McCluskey said.