

Supreme Court to Hear Case of Praying Coach

Joe Kennedy, assistant coach for the Bremerton, WA, high school football team, had a seven-year tradition of kneeling at the 50-yard line after games to pray. But in 2015, the Washington state school district suspended him, accusing him of endorsing his religion while serving in an official state capacity. The Supreme Court has now agreed to review the case after previously denying Kennedy's request in 2019.

School district officials asked Kennedy to stop praying in public and offered him a private space to pray in the press box. When he continued to pray on the field, players and attendees started to join him. The district said it had to fire him to avoid violating a constitutional requirement that the state cannot endorse a religion. Kennedy argues his prayer was a personal expression and had nothing to do with his coaching duties.

"No teacher or coach should lose their job for simply expressing their faith while in public," says Kelly Shackelford, president and CEO of First Liberty.

By agreeing to take this case, the Court will have an opportunity to protect the rights of Americans to live out their faith, including praying in public, without the fear of punishment. The outcome could restore the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment and strike a serious blow against a legal precedent that's harmed religious liberty for more than 30 years.

CAROLINA LUMETTA, excerpted from *World and Intercessors of America*.