NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Update: Judge allows Texas cheerleaders to use Bible banners

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Texas cheerleaders can continue to use banners with Bible verses after a court granted them a temporary restraining order against their school district.

A judge in Hardin County, Texas, issued the order on Thursday after parents filed suit on behalf of the cheerleaders. It orders the Kountze Independent School District to "cease and desist" from preventing high school cheerleaders from displaying the large paper banners, through which football players ran at the start of games.

A hearing on the case has been set for Oct. 4.

A lawyer from the Wisconsin-based Freedom from Religion Foundation sent a letter to the district saying the cheerleaders' tradition was "inappropriate and unconstitutional."

Superintendent Kevin Weldon had stopped the use of the banners after consulting with a legal adviser at the Texas Association of School Boards.

Liberty Institute, which is representing cheerleaders and parents in the case, hailed the judge's decision.

"We are excited that the cheerleaders for the Kountze High School Lions can again do what they do best -- cheer on their football team without government censorship," said Mike Johnson, senior counsel for the Texas-based Liberty Institute.

Although Weldon has said he supports the cheerleaders' stance, he was advised that legal precedent was not in their favor.

In 2000, the Supreme Court ruled in Santa Fe Independent School District v. Doe that student-led and student-initiated prayers conducted over a loudspeaker during football games were unconstitutional because they implied school sponsorship of the prayers.

Nine years later, cheerleaders at a Georgia high school who held nearly identical signs to those used in Kountze were also forced to stop by school officials who referred to the Santa Fe case.

Source URL (retrieved on *09/23/2014 - 19:16*): http://ncronline.org/news/people/update-judge-allows-texas-cheerleaders-use-bible-banners