

BIG WIN FOR RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Trinity Lutheran Church v. Comer*:

At issue is whether the state has a right to deny public funds to a religious entity when the disbursement is for a secular purpose. In other words, is it constitutional to treat a church in a manner that is different from a non-sectarian institution?

The Supreme Court ruled 7-2 that “the exclusion of Trinity Lutheran from a public benefit for which it is otherwise qualified, solely because it is a church, is odious to our Constitution all the same, and cannot stand.”

It did not mince words: “This Court has repeatedly confirmed that denying a generally available benefit solely on account of religious identity imposes a penalty on the free exercise of religion.”

Today’s victory extends way beyond the right of a Lutheran church in Missouri to receive public funding for a playground. Nearly 80 percent of the states have Blaine amendments, provisions that discriminate against houses of worship and religious institutions in the distribution of public aid. These amendments are rooted in anti-Catholicism, a bigotry that was central to the nativistic agenda in the nineteenth century.

Defending this bigotry was Americans United for Separation of Church and State, an organization that was itself founded as an anti-Catholic institution in the 1940s. The Interfaith Alliance and six Jewish groups also fought today’s ruling.

This is a big win for religious liberty. Many more are needed to restore fidelity to the original purpose of the First Amendment.