

“PERVASIVELY SECTARIAN” COLLEGE DENIED FUNDING

Columbia Union College, a Seventh-Day Adventist school in Maryland, was denied funding by the state because it was deemed a “pervasively sectarian” institution. The state turned down Columbia’s application for aid in 1992 under the Rev. Joseph A. Sellinger Program, which provides funding to private colleges, including religious ones. In June, the school sued the state with the help of the Center for Individual Rights.

The Tacoma Park college is challenging Maryland’s decision, claiming that denial of funds on the basis of religious viewpoint constitutes a violation of free speech and religious liberty. This is an important case for all religious schools because it allows the government to determine what is “pervasively sectarian” and what is merely “sectarian.” This language has previously been cited by other court rulings as a way to block assistance to Catholic schools. The league hopes that Columbia prevails in the end.