

## Fellowship of Christian Athletes Told to Change Its Theology at a Montana High School

Bruce Hausknecht – The Daily Citizen, Nov. 25, 2019

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There's the [First Amendment's](#) guarantee of religious freedom. Then there's the federal [Equal Access Act](#) that requires the nation's public schools to create a level playing field for the creation of all sorts of [student clubs](#). Finally, there's the Montana Constitution, which [copies](#) the language of the First Amendment's religion clause.

None of those established guarantees phased the Bozeman School Board when it recently [informed](#) the faculty advisor for the Bozeman High School student chapter of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) that the national organization's [statement of faith](#) violated the school district's discrimination policy. Not the local student chapter's rules or policy, but the national organization's.

Apparently FCA's adult leaders are required to adhere to a statement of faith and a behavior code that affirms that God instituted marriage as a union between one man and one woman, and that homosexuality and sex outside of marriage are not acceptable to God. But FCA does not require pledges of purity or behavior codes of students participating in school chapters.

Nevertheless, the school board gave the FCA faculty advisor two "choices": change its name and continue as an "inclusive" Christian club (read: compromise your biblical understanding of marriage and sexuality), or stay as an FCA club but only with an "unofficial" status, a designation which deprives it of using official school communication channels such as intercom announcements, and requires all of their flyers to contain a sticker labeling its status as "unofficial."

The controversy has only fueled community support for FCA. After the recent school board meeting, students showed up in numbers at the next FCA club meeting—48 in all—which the state director for FCA, Bob Veroulis, said in an interview with the [Bozeman Daily Chronicle](#) was a "huge increase."

State leaders are also concerned. Jeff Laszloffy is the President of the [Montana Family Foundation](#), a state family policy council and independent affiliate of Focus on the Family. He tells *The Daily Citizen* in an email: “When it comes to discrimination, the school board’s lawyers got it backwards. They should be reminded that the school district’s policy on ‘inclusion’ does not trump the FCA members’ constitutionally guaranteed right to religious freedom.”

This incident highlights the problems that follow when offended bystanders complain about someone else’s perspective, in this case about marriage and sexuality. Only four students complained to the Bozeman school board that FCA’s national organization might offend LGBT students at Bozeman High School, and it triggered the board’s “two choices” ultimatum to FCA’s faculty advisor. Both “choices” appear to violate federal law on religious freedom.

“The solutions offered by the school district are a Hobson’s choice and both should be rejected,” Laszloffy said. “If necessary, the students should go to court to defend their religious liberty.”