**Alliance Defending Freedom Takes on Faulty Interpretation of Title VII in Defense of Music Teacher**

**A musical instruments on a stage

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John Kluge, a music and orchestra teacher at Brownsburg High School in Indiana, represented by [Alliance Defending Freedom](https://www.bloomberg.com/profile/company/0992289D:US), is challenging the school district's decision to revoke his religious accommodation regarding students' pronoun usage.

Kluge was a highly regarded AP music theory and orchestra teacher at the Brownsburg Community School Corporation. With two degrees under his belt, he dedicated his entire career to imparting the love of music to young minds. Throughout his tenure, he achieved exceptional results - encouraging students to actively participate in extracurricular orchestra programs, achieving impressive scores on their AP exams, and elevating external orchestra ratings.

By all objective measures, Kluge was an outstanding and accomplished educator.

However, in 2017, the school district mandated teachers to address students using their preferred gender pronouns and names.

To adhere to religious convictions, Kluge requested a religious accommodation under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, seeking permission to address all students by their last names, similar to what a coach would do.

The school district initially granted Kluge's accommodation, acknowledging his religious views, and he continued to teach under this arrangement for an entire school year.

Unfortunately, some students and faculty expressed discontent with the accommodation, prompting the school district to reverse its decision and compel Kluge to resign, putting an end to his teaching career.

Kluge is being represented by Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) in his case, [Kluge v. Brownsburg Community School Corporation](https://adflegal.org/case/kluge-v-brownsburg-community-school-corporation), which argues that the school district's actions violated Title VII, a federal law prohibiting discrimination against employees based on religion.

ADF maintains that employers are required to provide reasonable accommodations for employees' religious practices unless it causes significant difficulties for their overall operations.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 7th Circuit had previously ruled against Kluge, but in light of a recent decision by the U.S. Supreme Court in [Groff v. DeJoy](https://adfmedia.org/case/groff-v-dejoy), the 7th Circuit has vacated its previous opinion and sent the case back to the district court for reconsideration.

The broader issue at stake, according to senior counsel with Alliance Defending Freedom Rory Gray, is the flawed interpretation of Title VII that dates back to the 1977 case *Trans World Airlines v. Hardison.*

This interpretation has made it challenging for employees to have their religious freedom respected by their employers. Kluge's case exemplifies how religious employees have faced adverse consequences due to this faulty standard.

In an [amicus brief](https://www.supremecourt.gov/DocketPDF/22/22-174/255739/20230228110510772_22-174%20Amicus%20Brief%20of%20John%20Kluge.pdf) on Kluge's behalf to the Supreme Court in the Groff case, Alliance Defending Freedom attorneys argued that the impact of the misinterpretation of Title VII extends beyond Christian employees, as other religious groups, such as Muslims, Sikhs, Jewish people, and Rastafarians, have also been denied reasonable accommodations for their religious beliefs.

In response to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 7th Circuit's decision Friday to vacate its opinion against the religious accommodation of Indiana high school music teacher John Kluge in *Kluge v. Brownsburg Community School Corporation,* Alliance Defending Freedom Senior Counsel and Vice President of Appellate Advocacy John Bursch said**,** "Federal law protects employees' ability to live and work according to their religious beliefs. Yet the Brownsburg school district ignored the law, deciding Mr. Kluge's religious views couldn't be tolerated, revoked his religious accommodation based on the grumblings of a few, and forced him to resign on pain of termination,"

"The school district's decision violates Title VII, a federal law prohibiting discrimination against employees on the basis of religion. As the Supreme Court recently affirmed in *Groff*, employers must provide reasonable accommodations for employees' religious practice unless doing so imposes undue hardships on their overall operations. The 7th Circuit has now sent Mr. Kluge's case back so the district court can fix its previous mistakes and apply *Groff* to uphold Mr. Kluge's constitutionally protected religious freedom," Bursch added in a statement on [Alliance Defending Freedom Media.](https://adfmedia.org/case/kluge-v-brownsburg-community-school-corporation)

Alliance Defending Freedom is an alliance-building, non-profit legal organization committed to protecting religious freedom, free speech, parental rights, marriage and family, and the sanctity of life.

Alliance Defending Freedom has two vital ministry arms known as [Alliance Defending Freedom Church Alliance](https://www.adfchurchalliance.org/) and [Alliance Defending Freedom Ministry Alliance.](https://www.adfministryalliance.org/) These arms offer essential legal support and guidance to churches and ministries, assisting them in navigating challenges to religious freedom. They play a crucial role in safeguarding the ability of churches and ministries to operate in accordance with their beliefs.