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***CHRISTIAN LEGAL SOCIETY ASKS THE SUPREME COURT TO REJECT MISSOURI'S
EFFORTS TO MAKE RELIGIOUS AMERICANS SECOND-CLASS CITIZENS***

“The government’s refusal to protect children because of their religious status is a particularly serious form of discrimination, treating religious persons as less than equal citizens. Yet this is exactly what is happening in Missouri, which refuses to let church preschools participate in a playground safety program,” said Center for Law and Religious Freedom Director Kim Colby. “Preschoolers deserve to be safe regardless of where they play.”

Christian Legal Society late yesterday urged the United States Supreme Court to reject the decision of a lower federal court in *Trinity Lutheran Church of Columbia v. Sara Parker Pauley*, a critical case regarding Missouri’s discrimination against its religious citizens.

Missouri excluded a preschool from participating in the Missouri Scrap Tire Program solely because it is a church preschool. The program provides grants for nonprofits to purchase materials made from recycled tires to re-surface playgrounds. CLS argues that Missouri’s the exclusion of churches from a child safety program violates the Free Exercise and Equal Protection Clauses of the First Amendment.

Under Missouri’s reasoning, churches in Flint, Michigan, would be excluded from government programs to protect children from lead in water. Churches and synagogues in New Jersey and New York could have been excluded from government programs to repair buildings damaged by Hurricane Sandy. By excluding houses of worship from such safety programs, the government penalizes religious congregations, who often selflessly serve those in need in their communities. Such discrimination would setback religious liberty by allowing state and local governments to discriminate against religious Americans, relegating them to second-class citizenship.

CLS’s brief was authored by Professor Thomas Berg of the University of St. Thomas School of Law (Minnesota) and Lucas Kane, a student at St. Thomas’ Religious Liberty Appellate Clinic. The brief was joined by the Anglican Church in North America, the Queens Federation of Churches (Queens, New York), the Family Research Council, the National Religious Broadcasters, and the Christian Medical Association. These groups represent hundreds of religious congregations, broadcasters, physicians, attorneys, and other religious citizens.

About Christian Legal Society:

Christian Legal Society (CLS) works to defend religious liberty through its Center for Law and Religious Freedom. Since 1981, CLS has filed briefs in most Religion Clause cases heard by the Supreme Court. Twice CLS has represented religious organizations before the Supreme Court when they have been excluded from a broadly-available governmental program.

About Trinity Lutheran Church of Columbia v. Sara Parker Pauley:

The Supreme Court is expected to hear oral argument in October 2016.

[CLS Brief: Trinity Lutheran Church of Columbia v. Sara Parker Pauley](#)

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