

Catholic Law Center Wins Free Speech Victory

The Thomas More Law Center has won a victory for a Catholic student whose viewpoint was banned from a panel discussion during Diversity Week

By Frank York

A Detroit Federal District has ordered the Ann Arbor Public Schools to pay \$102,738 in attorney fees and costs to the Thomas More Law Center for winning a lawsuit on behalf of high-school student Betsy Hansen.

Hansen had been banned from expressing her religious beliefs about homosexuality in 2002 during a "Diversity Week" program at Pioneer High School. The school had sponsored a "Homosexuality and Religion" discussion panel but had refused Hansen's request to include a panel member who would express Catholic beliefs about homosexuality.

The school claimed that Hansen's message was negative and would have watered down the positive religious mes-

sage they wanted to convey—that homosexual behavior was consistent with Christian teachings.

The Thomas More Law Center filed suit against the school district and several officials in July, 2002. The Center maintained that Hansen's constitutional right to free speech had been violated.

Detroit Judge Gerald E. Rosen issued a 70-page ruling in Hansen's favor. Rosen noted: "This case presents the ironic, and unfortunate, paradox of a public high school celebrating 'diversity' by refusing to permit the presentation to students of an 'unwelcomed' viewpoint on the topic of homosexuality and religion, while actively promoting the competing view."