

## Club's advisor cannot control it

To the editor:

A student and member of a Bible Club at Hunterdon Central Regional High School wanted to sponsor Dr. Robert Morey from Faith Defenders to speak on Islam, however, the Bible Club did not have an advisor.

Last year's advisor decided not to oversee the club until the teachers' contract was settled. The student alleged there were still clubs functioning with legal advisors. Finally, the student found a teacher who agreed to be the advisor.

The student handed in the application to reserve the auditorium May 15. The student alleged that advisor revoked the application, and the advisor told him that if he just wanted a legal advisor she did not want to be the advisor. The law states a legal advisor for a Bible Club can only be a custodial monitor and cannot exercise control over the club.

The student also alleged this took place last year when the club wanted to sponsor an ex-

homosexual to speak at the school. Last year's advisor made the decision to disallow the club to sponsor him. An outside group had to sponsor him, and the program took place at the little theater March 22.

My purpose here is not to assign blame on anyone, but to explain what the legal role of an advisor is to Bible Clubs according to the "Equal Access Act."


The Equal Access Act imposes one difference in treatment between religious student groups and other club. The Equal Access Act prohibits faculty or staff from serving in any role with religious student groups other than as a custodial monitor. In other words, the teacher-sponsor of a religious group is present only to ensure the group does not violate school policies or injure school property. Unlike the sponsor of a Chess Club, often himself a chess player, the sponsor of a Bible Club or prayer group is not permitted under the act to actively participate in the club's activities.

Prayer groups and Bible Clubs must be student-initiated. Students must create the clubs, organize their activities and lead their meetings. This requirement does not mean, however, that religious student groups cannot invite outside speakers.

If the school has non-curriculum related clubs, and the Bible Club has no advisor, the school has to appoint an advisor to the Bible Club. Also, students are allowed to hand out gospel tracts during non-instructional time. This is a First Amendment right. And it does not constitute soliciting; they are not selling anything!

For further information on students' rights, contact the American Center for Law and Justice at (757) 226-2489 and ask for their booklet entitled "Students' Rights and the Public Schools."

Or you can log on to [www.sclj.org](http://www.sclj.org).

  
Flemington