



VIRGINIA HIGH SCHOOL LEAGUE

1642 State Farm Blvd., Charlottesville, VA 22911

434-977-8475 / 434-977-5943 (fax)

www.vhsl.org

The Virginia High School League is an alliance of Virginia's public high schools that promotes education, leadership, sportsmanship, character and citizenship for students by establishing and maintaining high standards for school activities and competitions.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 18, 2015

VHSL responds to concerns about state events at Liberty University

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA -- The Virginia High School League (VHSL) hosts state level high school athletic and academic events each year at a number of college and university venues around the Commonwealth. Liberty University has been an approved venue for League events by express action of the VHSL Executive Committee for many years, and the designated 2016 events of debate, 3A/4A indoor track and 3A/4A Spring Jubilee are engaged by contractual agreements.

Recent highly publicized comments by Liberty University President Jerry Falwell, Jr. encouraging Liberty students to carry concealed weapons to "end those Muslims" have raised alarm among VHSL members. Some schools have expressed concern regarding the safety of their students on Liberty's campus, and some have threatened to boycott the state debate championship in protest of the comments by Dr. Falwell. VHSL staff and leadership take those concerns seriously and, together with appropriate law enforcement officials, will initiate a process of evaluating the safety of students when participating in VHSL events in light of these controversial comments.

VHSL respects the right of Liberty's President to engage in public speech, and will not take retaliatory action against the University even when that speech is found to be offensive by a significant number of VHSL member schools and their students. It is a bedrock principle of American Constitutional government that a citizen has a right to speak his or her opinions, even when others find those opinions to be rude and offensive. Likewise, it is the right of VHSL members to boycott or protest in a peaceful and appropriate manner consistent with Constitutional principles.

Nevertheless, VHSL places the highest value on the safety and security of its students, and takes steps to ensure that all students engaging in VHSL activities are afforded the opportunity to participate in an environment free from harassment, personal threat, or physical or mental harm. If these essential freedoms cannot be guaranteed to VHSL participants, VHSL will re-evaluate the propriety of using Liberty University facilities for its championship events in the future.

About the VHSL

The Virginia High School League (VHSL) is an alliance of 315 member schools that promotes education, leadership, sportsmanship, character and citizenship for students by establishing and maintaining high standards for school activities and competitions. The VHSL serves a diverse population and respects that diversity in all League activities.

Contact:

Ken Tilley, VHSL Executive Director

434-977-8475 ext. 111

Email: ktilley@vhsl.org