



PRESS RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE

ACLU SUES OVER STRIP-SEARCH OF STUDENT

Honolulu – The American Civil Liberties Union of Hawai'i filed suit today against Hawaii Academy of Arts and Science Principal Steven Hirakami, and the school secretary, Andrea Irvine, for strip-searching a 15 year-old girl. The Academy is a public charter school in Pahoa on the Big Island.

According to the complaint filed in Federal District Court, the girl was ordered to strip completely naked at the direction of Principal Hirakami in front of the school secretary. The girl and two other students were singled out as suspects in an alleged theft of thirty dollars from a school van driver's fanny pack. The girl did not take the money and was cleared of any wrong-doing. However, the girl, and the other female student were taken individually into a room by the school secretary, strip-searched, and forced to stand naked while the secretary looked through their clothes. The third student, a male, was not strip-searched.

"A student's right to privacy was grossly violated by the school administration. The Department of Education's policies clearly and specifically prohibit strip-searching of students. It is difficult to understand how the principal allowed this humiliating and demeaning treatment to occur," said Brent White, ACLU Legal Director and attorney for the girl.

This is the second time in recent years that the ACLU of Hawaii has sued regarding the illegal strip-searching of students. The last case involved the illegal arrest and partial strip-search of a twelve year-old girl at Niu Valley Intermediate School.

"Unfortunately, nothing can undo the wrong that has been done to this child," said White. "However, by filing these lawsuits, we draw attention to these problems and force public school officials to account for their misconduct."

###