

# [***Liberty University Slams Biden Administration After $14 Million Fine***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BGJ-3NR1-JBR6-90PT-00000-00&context=1516831)

Newsweek.com

March 5, 2024 Tuesday 3:55 PM EST

Copyright © 2024 Newsweek Inc. All Rights Reserved



**Length:** 450 words

**Byline:** Thomas Kika

**Highlight:** The school was fined for failure to meet crime reporting standards and for discouraging sexual violence victims from speaking out.

**Body**

Liberty University, the private evangelical school, said it has "repeatedly endured selective and unfair treatment" from the federal government after it was fined millions for failing to adhere to student safety guidelines.

Co-founded in 1971 by [*televangelist Jerry Falwell Sr*](https://www.newsweek.com/jerry-falwell-jr-calls-liberty-university-lawsuit-against-him-power-grab-full-lies-1584446?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships)., Liberty University is based in Lynchburg, Virginia, and has often been seen as aligning with right-wing ***politics***. In 2021, the school was sued by over 20 students and faculty members who alleged that it had discouraged sexual assault victims from reporting their cases.

While the school ultimately settled with many of the co-defendants, the suit led to an investigation into its practices by the U.S. Department of Education starting in 2022. After a lengthy process, the DOE determined that Liberty had failed to meet crime-reporting standards and had [*discouraged students from speaking out*](https://www.newsweek.com/woman-lists-everything-she-was-written-evangelical-university-viral-video-1664975?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships), violating the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act.

As a result, the school was hit with a $14 million fine from the DOE on Tuesday, the largest in history for Clery Act violations.

"Students, faculty, and staff deserve to know that they can be safe and secure in their school communities. We respond aggressively to complaints about campus safety and security," said Richard Cordray, chief operating officer of the DOE's federal student aid office, in a statement.

He continued: "Through the Clery Act schools are obligated to take action that creates safe and secure campus communities, investigate complaints, and responsibly disclose information about crimes and other safety concerns. We will continue to hold schools accountable if they fail to do so."

*Newsweek* reached out to the DOE via email for further comment.

In response to the fine, Liberty University conceded that there had been "numerous deficiencies" in its practices in the past. However, it accused the DOE of unfairly targeting it, compared with its past treatment of universities.

"In the report, many of the Department's methodologies, findings, and calculations were drastically different from their historic treatment of other universities," school spokesperson Ryan Helfenbein said in a statement.

He continued: "Liberty disagrees with this approach and maintains that we have repeatedly endured selective and unfair treatment by the Department. The University concurs there were numerous deficiencies that existed in the past. Examples include incorrect statistical reports as well as necessary timely warnings and emergency notifications that were not sent.

"We acknowledge and sincerely regret past program deficiencies and have since corrected these errors with great care and concern," Helfenbein said.

[*Link to Image*](https://d.newsweek.com/en/full/2357750/liberty-university-statement-fine.jpg)

**Graphic**

liberty university statement on fine

Andrew Lichtenstein/Corbis via Getty Images

Above, a view of the Liberty University campus in Lynchburg, Virginia, on October 20, 2018. The school claimed that it had been unfairly targeted by the federal government after was fined for failures pertaining to student safety.

**Load-Date:** March 5, 2024

**End of Document**