

The Supreme Court Update - March 21, 2023

by Brock Huebner

Today, the Supreme Court of the United States issued one decision:

Perez v. Sturgis Public Schools, No. 21-887: This case considered whether a federal education law’s administrative exhaustion requirements precluded a civil lawsuit under the Americans with Disabilities Act (“ADA”). Miguel Perez, a deaf student, claimed a Michigan public school district failed to provide him with qualified sign language interpreters and misrepresented his academic progress for years. When, months before his planned graduation, the school district revealed it would not award Perez a diploma, Perez and his family filed an administrative complaint under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (“IDEA”). That complaint settled and provided forward-looking relief to allow Perez to receive additional schooling. Perez then filed a civil lawsuit against the district under the ADA, seeking compensatory damages. The district court dismissed the suit, finding the ADA claim was barred by the IDEA’s prohibition on other lawsuits “seeking relief that is also available under [the IDEA].” 20 U.S.C. § 1415(l). In a 9-0 decision authored by Justice Gorsuch, the Court held that the IDEA’s administrative exhaustion requirement did not apply to this suit because the compensatory damages sought were not available remedies under the IDEA.

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