



National anthem policy

1 message

David Niose <dniose@americanhumanist.org>
To: NemethRy@collierschools.com

Fri, Sep 16, 2016 at 5:53 AM

Dear Mr. Nemeth,

Your recent video ordering students to stand for the national anthem at sporting events has been brought to the attention of the American Humanist Association, and we'd like to relay our strong objections to your actions. Ironically, under the guise of defending patriotism, you have insulted the core values for which true patriotism stands and violated the constitutional rights of students in doing so.

Somehow, you seem to equate standing for the national anthem with the notion of "respect," but you fail to realize that respect cannot be coerced. Either students sincerely wish to participate in the exercise or they do not, and your forcing them to stand does not actually produce one morsel of "respect." Instead, it is more likely to produce resentment from those whose deeply held opinions and principles are being *disrespected* by your coercive policy.

Perhaps you are proud that, through your position of authority, you can force children to do as you wish and create a false image of unanimity with regard to the national anthem for spectators to see at your school's games. But you shouldn't be. What you are really doing is discouraging thoughtful dissent, suppressing independent thinking, and encouraging a conformist mindset.

And please don't suggest that your actions should somehow be construed as a defense of men and women in uniform. Those who fight for this country fight for free speech, and most of them realize that those who opt out of the anthem are intending them no personal disrespect. Many military personnel and veterans would be aghast at your actions.

Please be advised that, should any student disciplined by your school for attempting to opt out of the anthem turns to the AHA for assistance, we will provide it. We have over 600,000 members and supporters around the country, and we have litigated constitutional cases from coast to coast. We sincerely hope that, after careful reconsideration, you will reverse your policy and stop disrespecting your students and the Constitution.

David A. Niose

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