

National
Coalition
Against
Censorship

BY ELECTRONIC MAIL
October 23, 2017

Bill Sanmillan, Board of Education President
Stuart Public Schools
8837 4th Street
Stuart, OK 74570

Dear Mr. Sanmillan:

We are a coalition of organizations dedicated to promoting the right of free expression. We write in support of the right of students in Stuart Public Schools to participate in non-disruptive protest during school functions.

We recently learned that on October 5, the Stuart Public School Board of Education adopted a policy that requires students to stand for the national anthem or face disciplinary action. While the policy vaguely frames its constraints as 'expectations,' it directly undermines the spirit of the First Amendment by threatening students who do not comply with disciplinary action. Such threats impermissibly chill student speech.

Stuart Public School students have a constitutionally protected right to peaceful and non-disruptive political speech, which includes the right to protest. *West Virginia v. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624 (1943). They are free to stand, sit, kneel, link arms, or gesture however they choose during the national anthem, provided that their actions are not materially and substantially disruptive. As arms of the government, bound by the First Amendment, Stuart school officials may not punish students for exercising this inalienable freedom.

We urge you to revoke your October 5th policy and clearly affirm the right of every Stuart Public School student to protest.

Please read our attached statement criticizing recent attempts to suppress student protests. We also invite you to consult our online resource on [student protests](#). Thank you.

Sincerely,



Chris Finan, Executive Director
National Coalition Against Censorship

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Christopher Finan
Executive Director

NCAC PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Actors' Equity Association
American Association of School Administrators
American Association of University Professors
American Association of University Women
American Booksellers for Free Expression
American Civil Liberties Union
American Ethical Union
American Federation of Teachers
American Jewish Committee
American Library Association
American Literary Translators Association
American Orthopsychiatric Association
American Society of Journalists & Authors
Americans United for Separation of Church & State
Association of American Publishers Authors Guild
Catholics for Choice
Children's Literature Association
College Art Association
Comic Book Legal Defense Fund
The Creative Coalition
Directors Guild of America
The Dramatists Guild of America
Dramatists Legal Defense Fund
Educational Book & Media Association
First Amendment Lawyers Association
Free Speech Coalition
International Literacy Association
Lambda Legal
Modern Language Association
National Center for Science Education
National Communication Association
National Council for the Social Studies
National Council of the Churches
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of Teachers of English
National Education Association
National Youth Rights Association
The Newspaper Guild/CWA
PEN American Center
People For the American Way
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Project Censored
SAG-AFTRA
Sexuality Information & Education Council of the U.S.
Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators
Student Press Law Center
Union for Reform Judaism
Union of Democratic Intellectuals
Unitarian Universalist Association
United Church of Christ
Office of Communication
United Methodist Church, United Methodist Communication
Women's American ORT
Woodhull Sexual Freedom Alliance
Writers Guild of America, East
Writers Guild of America, West

cc: Kevin Clift, Board Member
Shannon Brown, Board Member
Luke McIntosh, Board Member
Jeremy McMahan, Board Member
Tracy Blasengame, Superintendent
Chance Chapman, Vice Principal