

Editorial

If You Don't Want To Recite Pledge Of Allegiance – Don't

The recent decision by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals that ruled the phrase "one nation under God" unconstitutional is a blow to national security.

The enemies of the United States already feel that we are a decadent, godless, fallen people. This latest decision by the court can only serve to embolden radicals hell bent on destruction of our nation and serve as justification for destruction of the infidels.

The last thing we need right now are more misguided losers, both domestic and foreign, rallying to battle cry against the "godless empire." The court's ruling can only help to bolster this erroneous idea.

Sure, there are some Americans who don't believe in God, but that doesn't mean that their minority view outweighs that of the majority.

The First Amendment prohibits Congress from establishing a state religion but it also prohibits the passage of any laws that prohibit the free exercise of religion. The recital of the Pledge of Allegiance does not promote the establishment of a state religion nor does it force anyone to accept the belief in God.

It does, however, acknowledge the existence of a power (God) greater than the human condition. Then again, so do many hymns as well as the Declaration of Independence itself.

Even though it makes some people upset to admit it, the United States is a nation founded upon religious principals, like it or not.

The phrase "under God" was added to the pledge in 1954 after a campaign by a Catholic organization, the Knights of Columbus, convinced Congress to add it. On its face this addition to the pledge may seem religiously motivated, but well before this phrase was added the Supreme Court had ruled (in 1943) that school children could not be compelled to recite the pledge.

Rep. Pete Stark, D-Fremont, said last week, "I believe the court was right in declaring the use of the words "under God" in the pledge unconstitutional. While I don't oppose anyone reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, I think it was wrong to add the words 'under God' to the original pledge in 1954.

"I believe the phrase does not accommodate the diversity of religious and personal beliefs in our nation as the Constitution requires."

While Mr. Stark wants to come across as appreciative of diversity, he himself is not a good representative of the diversity of California. His attempt to appeal to an allegedly disenfranchised atheist minority shows he is less concerned with national unity than with trying to appear all-inclusive.

The important thing about the Ninth Circuit Court ruling is not that it gave atheists a warm, fuzzy feeling, but that it galvanized religious people to action.

It looks as though the ruling will be overturned.

The choice is clear. If the phrase "under God" offends you or your atheist parents, you can go outside when the pledge is being recited. If you can still hear the pledge over the public address system, have Mommy pack some ear plugs in your lunch box.



Commentary

Flighty Extra Fares For Fat Folk

Terrorists and fat people. Both feel nervous at the airport these days.

Ever since Southwest Airlines gave its ticket agents the go-ahead to grab fatties at the gate and shake them down for an extra seat, anyone with a little baggage around the middle has started to worry.

"Will I get there only to be told, 'Wait! You have to pay extra before you can fly?'" frets Rhonda Reddick, an avid vacationer who describes herself in the "gray area" between average and supersize.

Lenore Skenazy

As if flying wasn't scary enough!

Even as she's mulling the potential embarrassment and expense ahead, however, millions of punier Americans are praying this is exactly what awaits frequent flyers.

"I'm sick of being sandwiched between fat people who don't fit in one seat," says lifetime petite person Tammy Moran. "I paid for my whole seat. I shouldn't have to be touching someone else."

Jenn Cornell, who recently spent a five-hour trip next to a 300-pound man, recalls, "It was disgusting to have to share my seat with someone else's fat."

Is there any way to accommodate all creatures great and small at 30,000 feet?

Yes there is. It is time for the fat bashers to grow up.

No doubt it is uncomfortable to be squished into an airline seat by someone else's flub.

It's uncomfortable to be squished into an airline seat, period. They're built for Beanie Babies on diets.

But the horror with which people describe their fat

seatmates goes beyond mere discomfort. It sounds more like contempt. Church Lady seated next to Bill Clinton couldn't be more put out, and there's a reason for that, says Annette Bickford, a Long Island University sociology professor:

We see fat people as morally corrupt.

"We like to divide people into good people and bad people," explains Bickford, who has studied the issue of size. Fat people are automatically classified as bad because it's assumed they have no self-

control. "We see fat people in much the same way we saw poor people 100 years ago: It's all their fault."

But is it? Would anyone really choose to be fat - or poor, for that matter? Of course not.

Still, whining fliers can complain about people with double chins in a way they could never complain about, say, moms with lap children, because there is nothing immoral about motherhood. Can you imagine a business traveler moaning, "Toddler flesh spilled into my seat!"

Though a cranky kid can ruin a flight faster than any fat molecule, most mature adults realize: This is just part of life. OK. I'll shut up and deal.

With its new flag segregation directive, however, Southwest is sanctioning the last American prejudice: fat hating.

On the other hand, keep serving us those tiny bags of peanuts, and we'll all be size 6 soon enough.

Lenore Skenazy is a columnist for the New York Daily News.

Costs Of Title IX Now Outweigh Benefits

Josephine Potuto

women - at least when there are no scholarships as inducement.

I talked to a college tennis coach who coaches both men and women. His men's team is capped. His women's team has a numerical goal. He is expected to go find women to compete, whether they are talented enough and whether they are interested.

When he can't, he has to cut his men's team. The men he cuts are not on scholarship. They are paying tuition to the college. Cutting them is a net revenue loss.

I don't care whether we are talking about non-revenue men's sports or football. It is just not fair to prevent men from competing

without scholarship aid because women won't.

Thinking about how it is that we define equal opportunity and what we mean when we say that we want to provide equal access and the picture that I think of to illustrate this is a long row of people. Pre Title IX, all the men were at the head of that line and all the women were at the end. There was very little left by the time you got to the women in that line.

That was clearly wrong and Title IX has had a marked effect on that.

But now, we have what I think are two lines: the line of men with interests and ability in sports and the line of women with interests and ability in sports. The men's line is currently longer than the women's line. Some of it is driven by nature, not nurture,

and that line is probably always going to be longer than the women's line.

What we are doing is saying, wherever the women's line ends, that's where the men's line has to end. I don't think that's equal opportunity. I don't think it's fair that Johnny can't play because Mary doesn't want to.

I think we can do better than that. While I do not think we should be dismantling Title IX, I think we need to take a new look at it and find a different paradigm 30 years into the attempt to bring parity to women in athletics.

Josephine Potuto is the Richard H. Larson professor of constitutional law at the University of Nebraska Law College where she teaches constitutional law and sports law. She is currently the University of Nebraska's faculty representative to the Big 12 Conference and serves on several NCAA Division I committees.

Title IX Proves Girls Will Play

Linda Wharton

the victory of the 1999 U.S. Women's World Cup Soccer team in the presence of 90,000 fans and the soaring popularity of professional women's basketball.

In one generation, we've gone from a young girl like me hoping that a team existed to young girls today, like my daughters who hope they can make the team.

Jo argues that Title IX is unfair because girls are not as interested in sports as boys. If you look back at women's history, this argument, that women just aren't interested in things has been used time and time again.

When women were fighting to get the right to vote, guess what they said? They said that women just weren't interested in voting. I've never seen any data that says there's some sort of genetic biological difference that results in women not wanting to play athletics.

Girls have never been given equal opportunity and, until they are, we can't know whether they will be as interested in sports as boys. If anything, Title IX proves

When women on campus are polled, they do not express the same interest in sports. And there is nothing wrong with that. Obviously there are physical differences between men and women. To believe that those differences have no impact on the natural choices of girls and women, boys and men - those unfettered by societal strictures - seems plain wrong to me. And it seems equally wrong to believe that we should not value women's choices as equally important as those that men make.

The current push for women's athletics suggests that if the boys want it, it must be better than anything the girls would want. An example is college cheerleading. It is very athletic (certainly equal to bowling or synchronized swimming).

Cheerleaders have competitions. Athletics departments pay for the cheerleading budget. Yet cheerleading does not count for purposes of Title IX.

I think ignoring women's interests as reflected in what they do is demeaning to the interests and inclinations of women and it is counter-productive.

Title IX now is social engineering. Of course we can count every athletics opportunity for a woman as a success. But why isn't a cheerleading scholarship a success?

More important, what about the other things that a woman might have done? There are all kinds of things where the interests of men and women differ, and all of them are probably partly the result of socialization.

Women do not go into math and science in the same numbers as men. Isn't that a better, or at least an equally good place to try to manipulate women's interests by offering scholarships?

What is missed in this debate is that counting participant numbers means men and boys lose out when women and girls choose not to compete. And the data clearly show that women will not compete without scholarships.

"If you ask them, they will come," applies to men, not

Thirty years after the passage of Title IX of the Civil Rights Act, the federal law that prohibits sex discrimination in colleges and universities, gender issues remain at center court in college athletics.

Title IX revolutionized athletic opportunities for women but critics charge that these changes have come at the expense of men's sports programs. What does it really mean to achieve equity?

Law professor Josephine Potuto and women's rights attorney Linda Wharton debated this issue in a recent edition of NPR's "Justice Talking."

I absolutely agree that there has been an abysmal history of discrimination on the part of higher education institutions generally and within athletic departments in particular.

I also agree that Title IX produced what Ms. Wharton has described as a sea change with respect to women's opportunities in athletics.

But I believe that some of that change would have happened whether or not there was a Title IX. More important, I think we now have reached a point that accurately reflects the interest of women in athletics.

I also think that the cost to the implementation of Title IX are heavy and they now outweigh the benefits that have been produced.

When enforcing Title IX, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission assumes that men and women are equally interested in sports (and the interest matches enrollment numbers) and that ongoing discrimination is the only reason why there are unequal competitive opportunities for men and women.

To that I say, hogwash! All data supports the conclusion that women do not have the same interest as men in intercollegiate athletics or in athletics in general. High school participation levels are at a ratio of 60 percent to 40 percent, men to women, and have been for a while now. So are club and intramural college sports. And this difference clearly occurs when participation is open and there are no scholarships or other incentives that might artificially inflate the pure interest of girls in sports.

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Tel: 510.885.3175

Fax: 510.885.2765

Mailing Addresses
Pioneer Advertising

CSUH - MI 1075
510-885-3526

Pioneer Editorial
CSUH - MI 1076
25800 Carlos Bee Blvd.
Hayward, CA 94542

E-mail Address
pioneernewspaper@hotmail.com

Web Address
pioneer.csuhayward.edu