

VFW National Commander Slams Massachusetts School Committee No- Pledge Decision

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KANSAS CITY, Mo. — The national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. is appalled over an Arlington, Mass., school committee decision to reject a 17-year-old student's request to allow others to voluntarily recite the Pledge of Allegiance because some educators are concerned "that it would be hard to find teachers willing to recite it."

Thomas J. Tradewell Sr., a combat-wounded Vietnam veteran from Sussex, Wis., said the decision is particularly egregious while America is at war and preparing to celebrate Independence Day.

"I find it unconscionable that on the eve of our most patriotic holiday we are confronted with another reminder that the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have largely receded from the collective public mind," he said. "Even worse is knowing that this school decision occurred just down the road from Lexington and Concord, where the opening battles of our Revolutionary War were fought. This is just another galling example of the total lack of respect some have for America's freedoms and values."

The decision by Arlington school officials to disallow recital of the pledge was made even though it would be strictly voluntary for teachers and students alike and in spite of receiving a petition signed by 700 people, along with letters of support from lawmakers including Sens. John Kerry (D-Mass.) and Joe Lieberman (I-Conn.)

"Flying the flag, reciting the Pledge of Allegiance and singing our National Anthem are traditions worth maintaining and certainly worth passing on to our nation's youth — it's imperative that we do," said Tradewell. "The 1.5 million members of the VFW find this school decision extremely disrespectful to the members of our armed forces, to those who served in uniform before them, and to history, and we hope that the parents and the community rise up and force a change before the school decides that calling someone an American is now politically incorrect."

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