

Prayer in public schools

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It's a law in the United States that an organized prayer in a public school would be considered as unconstitutional. Furthermore, the only type of prayer that is constitutionally permitted is a private and voluntary student prayer as long as it doesn't interfere with the school's educational mission. Recently, the controversy over whether the government should or should not allow prayer in public schools has been more of a concern to the public, creating differing opinions in the matter of politics mixing with religion. One group of people is the liberals who believe that religion has no place in the government – not supporting school prayer. The other group of people is the conservatives who believe that there should be religion in schools, but I for one, side with the liberals.

A separation of church and state would be the most satisfactory solution to the prayer controversy, there's no need for arranged prayers in a public school. In fact, allowing the exercise of religion in public schools will lead to more debates between the government's institution that involves schools and the churches that represent people's religious beliefs. To avoid such arguments, it would be far more efficient if religious prayers were kept out of our public schools. If religious and moral teachings play a part in public schooling, it will create ethnic intolerance in families and schoolmates. Some students may not be able to partake in certain school prayers because the practice goes against their own religious beliefs.

Then students who were unaware of their religious differences will start to discriminate against other students whose religion they think is less superior to their own. When a person is stereotyping about another's religion, the victim might feel pressured to change their religious beliefs to be accepted

by their peers. This then arises another issue of parents that don't approve of their children to be adopting beliefs that may be contrary to the parent, which the student may have been taught or been participating in at school. The schools should avoid any practices that might weaken the respect children should have for their own parents' religious beliefs. It's the parent's responsibility to decide what their child believes in until they learn to understand more about religion. Organized prayers will also confuse children about their own religion when being exposed to other religious beliefs.

Then eventually students will start to doubt their own religion and question which beliefs amongst the various religious prayers at their school are correct. Other than highlighting the ethnic differences that causes conflicts in our communities, school prayer interferes with the school's mission of educating " the people of tomorrow" and thus misusing the parents' trust in their schools. The majority of parents say that public schools are expected to teach their children the basic subjects, such as math, reading and writing, not moral values and beliefs that can be taught at home by the parents. Parents are entrusting the public schools to educate their children and prepare them with knowledge and skills for the " bigger world." When religious exercise is practiced in place of the short school hours that should be initially spent on their regular curriculum subjects, students will be shortchanged in education.

The parents' trust will also be betrayed, since the families would be taxed to pay for facilities and other necessities for any religious practice that their children will need to participate in at school. The practice could even go against their own beliefs, making it unjust to pay taxes that support

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something they don't believe in. " These taxes should be collected to operate systems of public education, not for public religion," states the David Ross Editorial concerning school prayers. Not only does it violate the parents' trust in public schools, but school prayers also violate the First Amendment in the Bill of Rights of the U. S. Constitution which states: " Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.

" The first Amendment means that there is a separation of church and state whereas the government and the church cannot interfere with each other's business. President Thomas Jefferson deliberately built a wall of separation between church and state so that there would be no religious controversy in the matter of politics in order to protect America's melting pot of different religions. In Robert Frost's prose " Poetry in School," he reminds us of the significance of words and the translation or meaning behind them. School prayers are just the same, they are made up of words and meanings that tell you the beliefs in a religion. Since there is no prayer that is accepted by all religions, the school prayer would be supporting a particular religion which violates The Establishment Clause that states " the government cannot intentionally prefer one religion over another religion." If we allow a certain type of religion to overrule the others, then we are stating that you would have to believe in this particular religion to be an American.

This goes against America's purpose of having the freedom of religion that was suppose to be insured in the Constitution, thus is why school prayer is considered to be unconstitutional. In the conservatives' defense in supporting school prayers, there are many benefactors in having religious
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practice in public schools. Some people say that religion needs to be taught at school because there have been many conflicts and wars being fought where one group is trying to force their views on another, most particularly Europe. Since this is so, we must teach children how to deal with our religious differences. Yet, education symbolizes world views and values, which is why educating children is so utterly important and the time shouldn't be displaced with prayer. Conservatives also said that the Constitution guarantees our freedom of religion; furthermore, school prayer should then be allowed.

Though the freedom of religion as indicated in the Constitution isn't stated as clearly as it should be, it also states that the government cannot interfere with religion. This means that it is unconstitutional if the government creates a law that allows prayers in their institution, or public schools. Moreover, there's no need for organized prayers (religious practices, in general) in public schools for a student to pray. Students can and do take the advantage of being able to pray in solitude, as well as the advantage from the numerous days off the Department of Education provides to children for any religious holidays, practices, or traditions. Although conservatives can make a very convincing point in their argument, a majority of people don't support prayer in public schools and since America is a democracy, there shouldn't be school prayer according to the people's votes. There have been various past issues associated with the limit of our religious freedom when being dealt with the government's institution.

Religion is the moral beliefs that provide us with a faith in strength, values, and a guide through life. Thus if the government were to keep interfering

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with the importance of religion, then this controversy will never cease to end because “ confrontation always seems to escalate whenever religion and free speech join together,” says Marsel Gray, a staff writer of the Allstate Student Newspaper. This could continue for decades and we would still come to a disagreement, but what is needed is a solution that both sides of the argument can agree upon or at least satisfy. This solution would be the separation of church and state so that there would be no religious prayer or conflict in public schools, indicating it to be the best protection for religion. Whereas allowing school prayer will result to ethnic intolerance, interference with the school’s educational role and the violation of the Establishment Clause. The Establishment Clause, whose initial purpose was to protect America, a land of immigrants, and their many religious beliefs.

Hence, to protect our individual beliefs, we mustn’t allow prayers in school.