

With liberty and justice for all?

Is requiring time for recitation of the pledge of allegiance an effective way of increasing patriotism and student interest in government?

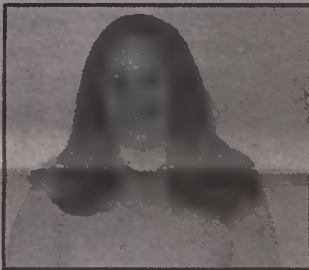
Yes

This is a step in the right direction. North Carolina is now one of 36 other states that require the Pledge to be recited daily. This shouldn't be such a big problem because saying the pledge would take less than 30 seconds out of the day, which isn't too much to ask for, even from someone as busy as an NCSSM student.

Where has this country's patriotism gone, when people are throwing a fit about spending a few seconds a day in an act to honor our country? How is this simple act of patriotism hurting anyone who lives here? If a student doesn't wish to say the Pledge of Allegiance, no one is going to make them, but the daily recitation gives students who wish to say the Pledge a chance to do so. More importantly this will unite students who may have little else in common other than being an American.

Most students today take for granted that they live in the United States. They don't regularly think about what it means to be an American, let alone talk about it. This lack of consciousness makes many Americans apathetic toward government and civic responsibility, which is evident from the low percentage of Americans who decide to vote. This new law will generate much needed discussion about patriotism and will create awareness of the many opportunities afforded to Americans. Students need a reminder of the rights and liberties that we as Americans are lucky enough to have. Why are various people so lazy and ungrateful as to make saying the Pledge of Allegiance each day an extreme hardship?

Are a few extra dollars and a few seconds used up each day more important than honoring a country that has given us the chance for everyone to be educated, or patriotism toward a country that allows each person to worship freely without fear of persecution? No, patriotism and honor are far more important. Without patriotism and honor the U.S. stops being the country that our founding fathers fought for. What will to stop the U.S. from being overtaken by another country if Americans don't care? Without patriotism and honor the U.S. is nothing.

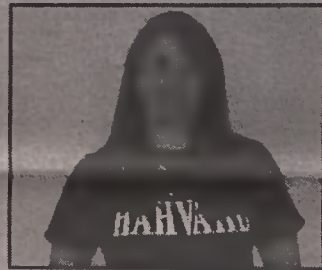


By Kathleen Boudreau

No

I'm not always proud to be an American—we're probably one of the greediest, most wasteful countries in the world—but I do appreciate the freedoms that set our nation apart from most. As students of NCSSM, most of us probably owe much of our success thus far in life to the privilege of American citizenship.

I just don't think we should be obligated to express our gratitude in the same way as anyone else at a pre-determined time and place, and that's why I don't like the idea of saying the Pledge of Allegiance every day. I understand that in the current state of the world, loyalty is an important issue in this country, but reciting the Pledge is not the way to go about increasing patriotism.



By Elizabeth Cutrone

What do the words in the Pledge even mean? Does anyone actually listen to what they're saying when they're gazing up at Old Glory with their hands over their hearts? Of course they don't. When people say the Pledge, they go into group mentality. Speaking in unison with so many other people dulls the rational mind, evoking and intensifying feelings of pride and belonging. It's one of the techniques Hitler used to brainwash Germany.

The United States is, of course, not pre-WWII Germany; it hasn't suffered nearly the same economic loss, and saying the Pledge isn't going to cause another World War. On a smaller scale, though, it could have similar effects. The positive emotional response to the Pledge could lull America's youth into a decidedly un-American complacency. This country was built on disagreement and the idea that different opinions should be debated until a compromise is reached. Historically, Americans have never been satisfied with the status quo. They have always strived to improve the world and their own country. But if everyone believes things are fine as they are because saying the Pledge every day makes them feel secure, there will be no dissent and that could lead to stagnancy.

Saying the Pledge of Allegiance isn't going to put too much of a strain on the student body. In the long run, though, it could ruin the forward-thinking mind set that characterizes American society.

Painting over history

By MARY KOHLMANN

"The beautiful girl herself writes poems in code," the poem begins. "An invented shorthand created by eliminating penstrokes from each word..." Reading it in newsprint, however, isn't quite the same. I'd like to show it to you in the mural form in which I found it, with the words interspersed with lines of zeroes and ones. Sadly, I no longer can.

The Beall Stairwell, which is off-limits to males, was one of the better-kept secrets of the school, but also one of the most unique. Until September of this year its walls, doors, floor, even the ceiling—every surface from the locked fourth floor door edging down towards Second Beall was completely coated in quotations, poems, lyrics and even drawings. But one of the things that most amazed me was that the dates left beside the writers' names went back to the school's very first graduating class.

The writings weren't perfect, of course. A handful of people wrote spiteful things about one another and about the administration. Yet these were vastly in the minority; most pieces clearly made an attempt at significance.

A slightly more valid criticism of the work is made by the administration that painted over it: that a few of the pieces were, as both Residential Life Director Mike Newbauer and Assistant Director Blakney put it, "dark."

"I think some of what was up there was unhealthy," Newbauer said.

These concerns are understandable. I realize that the delicate balance between protecting students and allowing them to express themselves is difficult for the Residential Life Department to maintain. Every staff member to whom I spoke expressed sincere regret that many years of tradition had been wiped away.

However, I feel that a greater effort should have been made both to involve students in the decision-making process and to allow students to create their own records before the painting wiped away the real thing. Art teacher Joe Liles was asked to photograph sections of the work, but the sheer volume of pieces prevented him from recording everything. What would it have hurt to give students advance notice so that we could have taken pictures of the words that were most meaningful to us?

The overwhelming feeling among those students to whom I spoke was one of shock and anger that our tradition could be wiped away without any discussion with us or even a prior announcement. No, we do not own the walls. But who other than students can be said to inherit the messages earlier classes sent down to us? Science and Math's status as a two-year institution leaves it with a short memory and frail traditions. I saw the Beall Stairwell as a rare form of student-to-student, class-to-class communication, and I felt nothing short of betrayed when it was destroyed without regard for those to whom it was precious and truly irreplaceable.



Photo courtesy of Joe Liles
Poetry appeared on every bit of free space before the Beall Stairwell was painted.