



AMERICAN ATHEISTS

September 16, 2015

Via email

Paul R. Green, P.A.
6866 Oak St.
P.O. Box 605
Milton, FL 32572

Re: Your Letter of September 16/Notification to Students About Pledge

Dear Mr. Green,

Thank you for your letter on September 16.

The parents of the autistic student do not agree with the recitation of events you provided. The student's autism contributes to anxiety about getting into trouble and upsetting his teachers, and the student finds it difficult to express his own opinions when challenged—as was the case here. However, the student's parents have agreed to let the matter rest so long as the student is not questioned again about his choice to sit during the Pledge of Allegiance.

I agree with your interpretation of Florida Statute 1003.44. I found no reference to any policy relating to the Pledge in the Santa Rosa student handbook so though that may be a remedy in the future, it does not work for these circumstances. We agree to the need for informing students of their rights in each classroom of the school district. This will also ensure that teachers and staff are informed as well of students' rights.

As for the language you proposed, I would suggest two changes as noted here in bold to acknowledge the complete rights of students:

“Students are invited to stand **and recite** the Pledge of Allegiance **to** the flag of our country, but they are not required to do so.”

Please advise me of the date when the notice will be posted or otherwise be provided to students.

Sincerely,
Amanda Knief
National Legal & Public Policy Director