

Should students stand for the pledge?

Yes, it is a unifying factor for the country

The Pledge of Allegiance is said at every school across Virginia, according to state law. It's a symbol of patriotism and respect while summarizing the points of what the U.S. stands for, in theory.

Many do not understand the importance of the pledge and the meaning behind it, so they question why they should stand. As an American, I believe it shouldn't even be a debate whether or not we stand.

We stand for the flag in order to honor those who fight, who have fought and who have died to protect our freedom and safety. We stand for the pledge to focus on what unites us as Americans not divides us. We stand for the flag not to pledge allegiance to a president, but to honor the reality that we have an elected president and not a lifetime king.

When I look at America and the pledge, I also look at other countries such as Iran and North Korea. Oppressive countries like those that don't allow anyone to publicly disrespect national symbols.

People that take these freedoms for granted are foolishly disrespecting what binds us together as Americans. Sitting during the pledge and kneeling for the anthem is not the correct time to protest racial injustice. The flag, pledge, and anthem stand for more than that, and some people fail to realize that.

Some of these people are like blind sheep following each other. There are reasons why some students don't stand, but those are only a few intelligent students that think with reasoning. Most students are lazy and when asked why they don't stand they reply with "I don't know, I just don't feel like it."

Several Supreme Court decisions have codified that no one has to recite the pledge, let alone stand when it is recited. That is your right as a citizen. I agree with it being voluntary because a forced recital would be like something done in a Nazi society.

The act of sitting during a national unifying pledge to the country that grants you individual freedoms is not only stupid but it is also self-defeating and misdirected.

Then again, in most places, sitting and not standing is more of a statement about yourself than about America. You don't come off as too smart, instead you come off as ignorant and ungrateful to the rights you are given.

No, students have freedom of speech

The United States of America is a free and democratic nation. There are no laws requiring students to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. Therefore, students should not feel compelled to do something they do not want to do. Under the rules of a democracy, it is wrong to force someone to speak or do what they don't want to do.

It's important to note that students who don't participate in the pledge aren't doing so just because they are lazy or because they don't care about the country. There are a multitude of reasons.

Many students see an issue with blindly professing an allegiance to a country. You should not have to pledge allegiance to a country that is doing things you do not agree with. For that reason, many students have chosen to not stand for the pledge because they disagree with the policies of the current president, Donald Trump.

Another reason students choose not to stand for the pledge is the phrase "One nation, under God." One important element of freedom in the U.S. is freedom of religion. The U.S. may have a majority of people who are monotheistic, but that doesn't mean that everyone believes we are united under one god. In fact, the phrase "under God" was added to the Pledge of Allegiance in 1954 by President Eisenhower. At the time, the Cold War was gaining steam, and Eisenhower was fighting communism across the globe. Back then, atheism was associated with communism, so he added "under God" to further separate the U.S. from the ideas of communism. But, this phrase just simply isn't as relevant nowadays, and is the reason many students choose not to stand for the pledge.

Many students also find issue with the phrase "with liberty and justice for all." Many feel America discriminates against race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, nationality, so on and so forth. The idea of pledging allegiance to a country that doesn't support them is ridiculous to them.

Whatever the reason, students should not feel obligated to stand for the pledge. Even if a teacher claims it's mandatory, the reality is, students can choose whether or not they want to stand for the pledge.

Timeline of the Pledge of Allegiance

1887

George T. Balch, former Lieutenant Colonel in the US Army,

writes the handbook *Methods of Teaching Patriotism in the Public Schools*. His campaign includes the placing of US flags in all public schools.

1892

Francis Bellamy writes the first Pledge of Allegiance with the words "I Pledge allegiance to my Flag and the Republic for which it stands; one Nation indivisible, with Liberty and Justice for All."

1898

The custom of rising for the flag begins during the Spanish-American war as patriotism increases.

1923

The National Flag Code is adopted at the National Flag Conference and it includes the Pledge of Allegiance.

1940

The Supreme Court rules 8-1 in the case of *Minersville School District v. Gobitis* that students can be expelled for refusing to recite the pledge.

1943

The Supreme Court reverses their ruling in *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette* deciding that students cannot be forced to recite the pledge.

1954

President Eisenhower signs a law adding the words 'under God' during the Cold War saying "we are reaffirming the transcendence of religious faith in America's heritage and future."

1992

Seventh Circuit Court rules that students may opt out of reciting the Pledge in the case of *Sherman v. Community Consolidated School District 21*.

The meaning of patriotism in America today

Patriotism is an active loyalty to one's country. Patriotism is important to any country. It is what bonds citizens of a country together regardless of other distinctions. American Patriotism is a loyalty not to a party or president, but to the American Constitution and founding values. The Constitution guarantees the basic freedoms and rights of American citizens, establishes a balance of power within the government, and creates the system for elections and peaceful transitions of power. The Constitution is America, and American citizens are America. As America changes, its roots stay the same. America is, as Abraham Lincoln said, "government of the people, by the people, for the people".

Patriotism is an attitude, an outlook, a perspective, not just actions. Patriotic attitudes show themselves with actions. The patriotic American spirit celebrates national holidays like Independence Day, the 4th of July, and Thanksgiving, when the pilgrims thanked God for providing abundance after a bitter first winter. Patriotism displays itself by voting and caring about the future of our great country. Acting upon beliefs, standing up for what is right, and becoming involved in political action also display patriotism. True patriotism is carried out with respect, compassion and honor.