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Free Speech Groups Defend Textbook Against Accusations of “Islamic Indoctrination”

Sullivan County, TN, Nov 21 2016- The National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC) is urging a Tennessee school to reject calls from a local parent to remove a textbook from a 7th grade curriculum because of its sections on Islam she claims are “indoctrinating.”

Michelle Edmisten, mother of a 7th grade student at Bluff City Middle School, has lodged a formal request for the removal of the Pearson company’s *My World History* textbook because it fails to “teach the history of Islam in truth or entirety.” Through her Facebook group, the Sullivan County Parents Against Islamic Indoctrination, which claims the Pearson board of directors is comprised of “globalists” and asks its followers to “speak to their churches,” Edmisten alleges the textbook’s “bias” infringes her daughter’s Christian beliefs. On this basis, she protests that her daughter received a grade of zero for refusing to complete assignments that used the textbook.

NCAC’s letter to the school board argues that it is impossible for a 7th grade textbook, intended to introduce students to world religions, to convey Islamic history in its entirety. The letter notes the distinction between religious education and indoctrination, underlining the need for basic religious literacy in our increasingly diverse and multicultural societies. The school’s decision to remove the textbook would also raise serious First Amendment concerns, the letter states, by ignoring the Supreme Court’s 1989 ruling in *Texas vs Johnson* that government may not discriminate against “the expression of an idea simply because society [or a parent] finds the idea offensive or disagreeable.”

The letter is co-signed by the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund, American Booksellers for Free Expression, American Library Association, Association of American Publishers and the Children’s and Young Adult’s Book Committee.

In the past year NCAC has noticed an uptick in challenges to educational materials involving Islam. In response, NCAC compiled [a timeline of these incidents](#) and [a resource](#) that details the fundamental misconceptions in the conflation of teaching Islam and religious “indoctrination.”

“Islam is one of the largest world religions, second only to Christianity,” said NCAC's Josh Zuckerman. “Eliminating the subject from the classroom would necessarily fail students in their education of the world and its history”

[READ THE FULL LETTER](#)

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The National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC) is an alliance of 50 national non-profit organizations dedicated to defending freedom of thought, inquiry and expression.