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NCAC to Florida School: Drop Student Requirement for Parent Permission to Protest

New York, NY, September 27 2016- The National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC) has expressed concern over a Florida school district's decision to require student athletes to first attain parental permission if they wish to protest during the national anthem.

In a recent statement, Collier County Public Schools, Fla, announced that students participating in "district athletic programs" must receive a written parental request in order to be excused from active participation in the national anthem played at sports events. Collier County's statement is the most recent example of a school responding to a student protest of this nature in a way that infringes on their free speech rights. [Similar incidents have recently emerged in schools in Chicago, California and another Florida district. The protests are inspired largely by NFL player Colin Kaepernick's decision to kneel during the national anthem at football games, a response to continued acts of police brutality on African-American citizens.](#)

NCAC's letter to the school district underlines that the non-disruptive act of kneeling or sitting in protest is a First Amendment protected right of a student, which does not justify the need for parental permission. The requirement will inevitably chill student speech and free expression, the letter reads, and undermines an educational opportunity for students to discuss and debate the issues at stake at a time when race relations, political protest and police brutality are of particular cultural urgency. NCAC urges the school board to reconsider their decision.

"To sustain our democracy, we need future citizens that value individual civic responsibility and political awareness," said NCAC Director of Programs Svetlana Mintcheva. "Stifling the political expression of students undermines that goal. And this is what the unnecessary parental permission requirement does."

[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.