



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on April 20, 2010

Day of Silence Still Sparks Protest

It isn't often that parents have occasion to protest an outbreak of silence by their school-age children, but the "Day of Silence" observed by students in schools across the nation on Friday, April 16, sparked a reaction from some pro-family groups that urged parents to keep their children out of school to avoid the event, organized each year by the Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network.

"Parents must actively oppose this hijacking of the classroom for political purposes," Tim Wildmon, president of the American Family Association, wrote in an e-mail to AFA members. "Parents should no longer passively countenance the political usurpation of public school classrooms through student silence."



The National Day of Silence encourages students to "take a vow of silence to bring attention to anti-LGBT(Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) name-calling, bullying and harassment in their schools," according to the Day of Silence [website](#). The commitment is to avoid speaking between classes, during lunch breaks and other free time — and even during classes, if teacher and school administrators allow it. "We recommend that you talk to your teachers ahead of time, tell them what you plan to do, and ask them if it would be okay for you to communicate on that day in writing," was the advice posted on the website. But Wildmon argued that students' observing a vow of silence during classroom discussions or when called on by their teachers would be disruptive and "politicize" the classroom environment.

"If students will be permitted to remain silent, parents can express their opposition most effectively by calling their children out of school on the Day of Silence and sending letters of explanation to their administrators, their children's teachers, and all school board members.," the AFA president wrote.

In Bedford, New Hampshire, high school students who observed the Day of Silence were given credit for fulfilling the "Democracy in Action" component of Real World Learning hours, a requirement for graduation. One Bedford resident protested in a letter to the editor in the *Bedford Bulletin* over what she said was an e-mail from a school counselor asking teachers to okay the participation as a "Democracy in Action" project.

"The fact that there is a student group for homosexuals is not the issue, but the fact that a school district official urged teachers to give students credit for participating in a controversial event is unacceptable," wrote Devin Farrelly, who also complained that there was no notice about the event in the school's newsletter or calendar. "As taxpayers and parents, we should be aware of just how our children are being indoctrinated at Bedford High School," Farrelly wrote. But Bob Jozokos, the school's interim principal, said he would also allow the students to gain Real World Learning hours for



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participation in Tea Party events or other political activities.

"I'm not looking at the value statement so much, he told the *New Hampshire Union Leader*. "I'm looking to see if it falls under the idea of getting kids involved in democracy and speaking their mind and becoming part of the process that we value in this country."

But having the Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network activities in the schools does not reflect the values some parents hope to promote. Laurie Higgins of Illinois Family Institute argues that the anti-bullying campaign is a cover for a campaign to promote homosexuality. "But the part they leave out is it's trying to end bullying by normalizing homosexuality," she said. "Political action doesn't belong in the classroom."

Randy Thomasson, president of [SaveCalifornia.com](#), was urging parents to hit their school districts on the bottom line if their schools take part in the Day of Silence. "Every child that stays home on Friday in protest will take almost \$100, in California at least, from the government school system in the form of ADA — average daily attendance funds," Thomasson told [Onenewsnow.com](#): "We think that's appropriate punishment for a school district that allows homosexual indoctrination of children."

In Baraboo, Wisconsin, students in the high school's Gay-Straight Alliance, sold T-shirts, distributed rainbow ribbons, and spoke only when asked to in class. But some "gay" activists in Lansing, Michigan, expressed their outrage when "Straight Pride" T-shirts were sold at a Tea Party Express rally there. The *Michigan Messenger* reported that a spokesman for the Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network was especially troubled by the sight of parents allowing a young person to purchase one of the shirts.

"These shirts promote harassment and bullying of actual or perceived LGBT youth, plain and simple," Daryl Presgraves said in a statement. "We hope the parents at the very least have the common sense and decency to not let their children wear such shirts to school, where they would contribute to what is already an incredibly hostile environment for LGBT youth, especially in middle school, where 39 percent of LGBT middle school students experience physical assault in school because of their sexual orientation. Seeing young people where these shirts is yet another reminder of why Friday's National Day of Silence is as important today as it was when students created it in 1996."

"It's shameful," says Michael Cole, spokesperson for the Human Rights Campaign, a Washington D.C.-based LGBT rights group.

"Homophobia has no place in our country, let alone as a tool for groups to profit from."

Apparently only champions of "gay rights" and other "progressive" causes are entitled to profit from their protests, silent or otherwise. Those who wish to express "straight pride" still have the right to remain silent. But at least some advocates have retained a sense of humor. Tammye Nash, writing on [DallasVoice.Com](#), "The Premier Media source for LGBT Texas," took issue with Wildmon's claim that the Day of Silence would be disruptive in classrooms. "Okay, first of all, as the parent of a son who is constantly getting in trouble for talking when he shouldn't be, the idea that students are disrupting classes by being quiet made me laugh out loud," she wrote. "Most teachers I know (including my now-retired father and my sister), would love to have a whole day of quiet students for a change! I figure that allowing a student to write an answer down — on paper or the blackboard — instead of speaking to answer a question would be a small price most teachers would willingly pay."



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