



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on February 28, 2013

Texas High-school Student Punished for Refusing to Recite Mexican Pledge

A Texas high-school student is suing her local school district after she was punished for refusing to stand and recite Mexico's pledge of allegiance as part of a Spanish class assignment. The [lawsuit charges](#) that the McAllen Independent School District violated 15-year-old Brenda Brindson's constitutional guarantees when her Spanish teacher required her to recite the Mexican pledge and sing its national anthem, and gave her a failing grade when she refused.



In the fall of 2011, Brindson entered McAllen's Achieve Early College High School with the goal of doing well in her classes. But problems developed immediately after the high-school sophomore "refused to stand up, extend her arms straight out with palms down, and recite the Mexican Pledge of Allegiance and sing the Mexican National Anthem," explained the [Thomas More Law Center](#) (TMLC), which is representing Brindson in the lawsuit.

The activity was part of what the school's Spanish teacher, Reyna Santos, required of all her Spanish level 3 students in order to pass the class. But when the time came for the students to pay homage to their neighboring country to the south, Brindson remained seated. It's not that the young lady has any problem with Mexico or its people. After all, while she was born in the United States, her mother is a Mexican immigrant. "Brenda is fluent in Spanish and English and is proud of her Mexican heritage," related the TMLC, "but she is a true blooded American. So to Brenda, the words of the pledge have a deep meaning. Her conscience and patriotism would not allow her to participate in the assignment."

[Ironically](#), the McAllen school district has a policy that allows students to opt out of reciting both the U.S. Pledge of Allegiance and the Declaration of Independence if the student "as determined by the district, has a conscientious objection to the recitation." Also ironic was the fact that the assignment in which Brindson refused to participate was given during the school's celebration of Freedom Week, which observed the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 terror attacks, and also on U.S. Constitution Day.

According to the TMLC, Brindson's refusal was met with a strong negative response by Santos and the school's principal, Yvette Cavasos. "Both tried to coerce her to recite the Mexican pledge, saying this was just an assignment," recalled an account by the law center. "Brenda attempted to discuss reasons for her refusal to pledge allegiance to a country other than the United States with both Santos and Cavasos. When Brenda did not back down, she was punished."

While Brindson offered to recite the U.S. Pledge of Allegiance in Spanish as an alternative to reciting the Mexican pledge, Santos instead assigned her to research and write on Mexico's independence, for which she was given 13 out of 100 points — a failing grade — although by all accounts the essay was above average. Additionally, she was required to sit in class over several days listening to student after student reciting the Mexican pledge.

"Following the incident," related TMLC, "Brenda was involuntarily removed from her Spanish class. She



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spent the class hour in the school's office, even though she requested to return to the classroom. Brenda was also given a failing grade on her report card" — a mark that was later raised as the school realized Brindson and her father were going to file a lawsuit.

"What are we to do," said the girl's father, William Brindson, "just lay down and let it happen? Or should we stand up for our country?"

TMLC president and chief counsel Richard Thompson agreed. "Too many Americans — including those of Mexican descent — have suffered and died protecting our nation," he said. "It's astonishing that this Texas school would deny Brenda her right of conscience and free speech not to pledge allegiance to a foreign country."

Thompson noted that "there is a sad trend in public schools across our nation to undermine American patriotism. But it's encouraging to see students like Brenda stand up for America despite pressure from school officials."

The incident has raised the ire of patriotic Americans around the nation, particularly in the Lone Star State. Republican Texas State Rep. Dan Flynn said he was shocked by the episode and would introduce a bill requiring more mandatory studies of exclusively American subjects like the U.S. Constitution in Texas high-school classrooms. "I do have a problem if we're making an assignment for young people to stand up and pledge to another country," he told local television station [WFAA](#). "It lessens the value of the pledge to the United States flag."

As for Brenda Brindson, she said she was simply taking a stand for what she believes. She added, "I really hope I was an inspiration to a lot of youth in America to stand up for what's right."



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