



School Blocks Conservative Websites — but Not Liberal Ones

While academics often speak reverently about the “marketplace of ideas,” it seems that many educational institutions opt for a controlled economy of expression. A good example is Nonnewaug High School in Woodbury, Connecticut, where an 18-year-old student found that the school was blocking conservative and Christian websites — but not corresponding liberal and non-Christian ones.



As he conducted research last month for a classroom gun-control debate, Andrew Lampart found that access to the websites of the National Association for Gun Rights and the National Rifle Association was forbidden. Yet anti-Second Amendment pages such as the Newtown Action Alliance and Moms Demand Action were not blocked. Was this merely attributable to the anti-gun paranoia that has some schools punishing children for shaping their fingers as a pistol? Hardly.

Suspicious and curious, Lampart explored websites relating to other issues. Writes [FoxCT.com](#):

“I immediately found out that the State Democrat web site was unblocked but the State GOP web site was blocked...,” [said Lampart].

Lampart even looked at Web sites focusing on abortion issues and religion. He found that “right-to-life” groups were blocked by the public school firewall but that Planned Parenthood and Pro-Choice America were not. He also tried to get on web sites such as Christianity.com and the Vatican’s web site but both were blocked. Islam-guide.com he found, was not.

Taking the initiative, Lampart met with his school principal, Andrew O’Brien, who referred him to the superintendent of Woodbury schools, Jody Goeler. He then lodged a complaint with Goeler, but the censorship was still in place a week later. So, [writes](#) CBS Connecticut:

[Lampart] decided to take his concerns to the Board of Education on Monday [June 9].

“It’s not a joking matter in terms of having access to both sides of an issue,” Board Chairman John Chapman told WTIC.

“The Board appreciated hearing the comments from Andrew and agree that he has raised an important issue that warrants further investigation,” Chapman explained.

Not only does the problem still exist, however, but such tepid bureaucrat-speak could make critics suspect that officials were just trying to run out the clock till the summer break. For example, Superintendent Goeler sent Fox News’ Todd Starnes a somewhat lengthy letter in which he placed the onus on his district’s filtering service, Dell SonicWall, [writing](#):

The district has pressed Dell SonicWall for more information about how websites are assigned to categories and why there are apparent inconsistencies, as discovered by the student, in classifications particularly along conservative and liberal lines. Many of the liberal sites accessible



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on June 21, 2014

to the student fell into the “not rated” category, which was unblocked while many of the conservative sites were in the “political/advocacy group” which is accessible to teachers but not to students. The district is trying to determine the reason for the inconsistency and if the bias is pervasive enough to justify switching to another content filtering provider. The district does not block individual sites, only categories of websites. The categories are supposed to be inclusive of all sites that fall into a common description.... Once we receive a statement from Dell SonicWall clarifying its process for assigning websites to categories, I will post it on our website for your review at www.ctreg14.org.

As of this writing, however, no statement from the filtering service has yet been provided. Moreover, Goeler said that the district has “an interest in exposing students to a wide and varying number of viewpoints” and “does engage in unblocking sites to provide diverse points of view and balance in the instructional process.” This apparently means that Goeler could have ordered the conservative/Christian sites unblocked the next day regardless of Dell SonicWall’s filtering criteria.

This has prompted Starnes to [call](#) Goeler’s response “a load of unadulterated, Grade-A hooey.” For sure, critics may wonder, given that the district does “engage in unblocking sites,” is the censorship the work of Dell or a leftist Woodbury school employee?

Or, worse still, does it reflect unstated district-wide policy?

Whatever the cause, Lampart makes no bones about his view of the effect. Writes Starnes, “‘This is really border line indoctrination,’ Andrew told me. ‘Schools are supposed to be fair and balanced towards all ways of thinking. It’s supposed to encourage students to formulate their own opinions. Students aren’t able to do that here at the school because they are only being fed one side of the issue.’”

And insofar as this unbalanced diet goes, say critics, American students are well fed, indeed. As *American Thinker’s* Rick Moran [wrote](#) about the Woodbury censorship:

This is not a rare occurrence. It’s not only schools that ban conservative or Christian websites, it’s public libraries and many public computers like those found in coffee houses. No doubt the good liberals running that school would say they only wanted to ban “extremist” websites, or websites that might “offend” others. They are probably shocked to discover some people think they are censoring political debate — or not. Their cluelessness should not be discounted given their warped worldview, especially as it relates to offending Muslim students who may accidentally stumble upon a Christian website.

Guiding young minds to “think correctly” is, they feel, part of their mission. To that end, only approved thought is allowed to be accessed.

And the result is what has become status quo: Conservative school commencement speakers are [increasingly rare](#). In fact, conservative speakers [sometimes](#) are deterred by, or rejected due to, student and faculty protests; some have even been shouted down and/or attacked while on college podiums. Conservative college newspapers have been stolen and destroyed, and a politically correct atmosphere and even speech codes that stifle conservative expression are common on university campuses. So, as in Woodbury, educators may be capable of passing the buck from principal to superintendent to a software company, but there’s one thing they aren’t passing at all: educators’ greatest test — whether or not they expose students to Truth.



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