



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on May 27, 2011

ACLU Targets Religious Symbols at N.J. Graduation Ceremonies

The complaint of a single individual in New Jersey's Neptune Township over the presence of religious symbols at a commencement ceremony last year forced the Township school board to reach an agreement with the American Civil Liberties Union to make sizable changes to this year's event.



The Blaze [writes](#): "In an effort to ease tensions and avoid an unwarranted court battle, officials will cover up the few religious symbols that are present inside the [Ocean Grove](#) Great Auditorium [picture at left]. Additionally, students and families will be forced to enter through a side door to avoid walking under a 20-foot cross that is positioned above the front entrance of the building." Ocean Grove had its origins as a location for summer camp meetings sponsored by Methodist clergy, earning it the nickname: the "Queen of Religious Resorts."

The school has been holding graduation ceremonies without incident for the past 60 years, and no families have ever complained about being offended by the religious symbols.

The complaint reportedly came from a woman described by NBC as "non-district."

Predictably, the ACLU is satisfied with the agreement. Communications director Katie Wang remarked that the group is pleased that students will now be able to enjoy the graduation ceremony "without feeling like outsiders based on religious differences."

Commenting on the outcome, *The Blaze* opines:

So, while tax-paying, district families seem to have no problem with the traditional nature of the event, an individual with no official ties to the school has caused quite a stir. For now, though, it seems the debate has been settled.

As graduation season approaches, stories such as these are seemingly becoming more prevalent. *The New American's* Dave Bohon reported this week on a similar story regarding prayer at the commencement ceremony of a Louisiana high school.

After graduating senior Damon Fowler issued a complaint objecting to prayer at the commencement ceremonies of Bastrop High School, the American Civil Liberties Union threatened to file a lawsuit against the school if seniors continued a tradition of prayer at graduation.



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As a result of the ACLU threat, the school agreed to cancel the prayer, and the ACLU counted it as another victory. Or so they thought.

TNA's Bohon [wrote](#):

But during the ceremony May 20th at the school's football field, as graduating senior Laci Rae Mattice stood at the podium to lead a "moment of silence" that school officials had inserted to replace the prayer, she called an audible instead. "I respect the beliefs of other people," Mattice told the parents, family, and friends assembled for the graduation, "but I feel that I can't go on without giving glory to my Lord today. I want to ask for the Lord's blessings upon us." With the crowd cheering her on, Mattice then invited her fellow seniors to join her in reciting the Lord's Prayer "if they want to."

Matthew Staver of Liberty Counsel aptly articulated the concerns raised by the incidents at the New Jersey and Louisiana high schools. Indicating that the schools should not be kowtowing to the demands of the ACLU, he explained that the Constitution "does not require that graduation be free of religious people or speech," and declared that the ACLU's interest in restricting religious viewpoints is "intolerant and unconstitutional."

These incidents are yet more examples of the growing notion that people somehow have a *right to not be offended*, something that has not been guaranteed by the Constitution, even in the loosest interpretations of the document.

Will the students of New Jersey's Neptune Township rise to the challenge posed by the ACLU and follow in the footsteps of those at Bastrop High School?

We shall see.



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