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Religious Expression in Public Schools  
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I support religious expression in public schools.

It is understood that there are many different religions practiced in our country, the United States of America. Our country was founded upon giving certain rights and freedoms to all of those who live within it. Whether a person is Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, Muslim, or non-denominational, I feel that everyone has the right to embrace his or her freedom of religion. Yet in today's current situation some people are making an issue of being "free *from* religion" in our public schools.

It was found in a recent study that eighty percent of Americans are for allowing prayer in public schools in order to put back good morals that have supposedly been lost. I feel that if a child wanted to say a prayer in his or her school, that they should be able to as long as it is on their free time such as lunch or a free period and would not interfere with the educational process. If religious expression is allowed, it would not be forced upon any other children but would only fulfill that child's right to pray when he or she had free time to do so. By allowing prayer in public schools, children would be able to express their freedom of religion, fulfill their rights as an American citizen, and feel welcomed rather than attacked for having their beliefs. The 20 percent of Americans who believe that religious expression in school is wrong, are misguided, for no one prayer would be forced upon any child; each would only be granted the *right* to pray and free time to do so. If children were able to have this equal freedom, it would strengthen the school by encouraging religious tolerance and respect for other people's religious beliefs.

Recently, Missouri state legislators approved a state constitutional amendment...intended to ensure (that) students can pray privately and voluntarily at public schools. Missouri State Representative Carl Bearden thinks faith is “under constant attack.” This statement is supported in today’s society by demands for the removal of “under God” from our country’s Pledge of Allegiance, and attempts to ban all religious expression in our public schools. Missouri’s amendment provides for the “free exercise of religious expression without interference, as long as the prayer or other expression is private and voluntary...and in a manner that is not disruptive nor in violation of other policies, rules or standards.” I believe this is the perfect answer to accommodate the 20% who do not support religious expression in school.

Our founding fathers created our government based on the fundamental morals of freedom, respect, and equal opportunity. If a Jewish child asks to have a menorah up to celebrate Hanukah, or a Christian child asks to have a Christmas tree in the hallway-anything, that child should be able to express his religious holiday as long as other children had the same opportunity. The only social difficulty present in today’s society is people not having the decency to respect these alienated students who feel punished for expressing their religion in schools.