

6 Jun 21

Mr. Becker, Ms. Kerr, Ms. Levine, Ms. Pollak, Ms. Rice

I am writing in advance of your June 9th board meeting, at which I anticipate speaking during the period dedicated to public comment. The two-minute time cap during this period means my statement will be necessarily limited. Accordingly, I thought it best to precede my comments on Wednesday with a preparatory letter. Thank you in advance for taking a few minutes to read what follows.

My purpose on Wednesday evening will be to express profound concern over the fact that last month San Lorenzo Valley School District (SLVUSD) schools officially flew the LGBTQ+ pride flag above their campuses. This included SLV High School, where my daughter recently completed her tenth-grade year. Such a display on public school campuses was highly inappropriate for at least the following three reasons:

1. *A question of authority* – To fly a flag above a facility is to assert authority on the part of the entity or philosophy the flag represents over the location in question. Per district policy, it is our national flag and the flag of California that warrant display at any public school facility. Both the United States and the State of California have a true claim on the allegiance of residents in this valley, and thus rightly demand our appropriate submission to their authority. Hence, it is right for these flags to fly over SLVUSD campuses. Such is not the case with the LGBTQ+ movement and its flag. Rather, the LGBTQ+ pride flag makes a social, political, and even religious statement that many cannot accept or condone. It demands recognition and acceptance of what many believe to be immoral. The constituents of the SLVUSD do not owe allegiance to the LGBTQ+ movement, and thus its flag does not belong in a public school space. Of course, this does not preclude someone's display of the LGBTQ+ pride flag on their private property for reasons of their own.

2. *A question of official bias and inappropriate sponsorship* – As I note above, the LGBTQ+ pride flag communicates a social and political message beyond the pale of what is appropriate for a public school. Flying such a flag effectively demands, albeit implicitly, that those associated with the school accept the truth claims asserted by LGBTQ+ advocates. And yet, those truth claims run directly contrary to the deeply held religious convictions of many in our society, including at least some of the students in our schools. Since when did it become appropriate for a public school to blatantly prefer the socio-political message of one party in profoundly moral questions of sexuality and gender? Additionally, if the SLVUSD has determined to fly one partisan flag, then when will it give equal time to other expressions of cultural, political, or religious viewpoints? Why can we not content ourselves with the flags of our country and our state?

3. *A violation of conscience* – Especially in the context of a public institution (like a school), when someone walks into a building displaying a flag, that person comes, both literally and figuratively, under the authority, or the message, of what the flag represents (see above). Consider a student walking onto the SLVHS campus and passing underneath the LGBTQ+ pride flag. The implicit message communicated to that student is that by attending SLVHS they must submit themselves to the demands and truth claims asserted in the worldview conveyed by the flag itself. And yet, again, we have students who daily attend SLVUSD schools and believe – as a matter of deep, sincere, conviction – that homosexuality is wrong; that there is such a thing as a biological man and biological woman; that gender is not a transitory, self-determined reality. By flying the LGBTQ+ pride flag as happened last month, SLVUSD implicitly tells these students that their convictions, even religious convictions, are false, their perspective bigoted, and their opinion not welcome. To make this point clear, I have attached to this letter a note written by my daughter – of her own accord – to the SLVHS principal and the SLVUSD Superintendent. Please note her perspective as a student. Does the SLVUSD mean to violate the conscience of this young woman by forcing her to attend school underneath a flag that denigrates her deeply and sincerely held religious beliefs?

To date, I have addressed this issue with the SLVHS principal, the SLVUSD Superintendent, the Superintendent of the Santa Cruz County Office of Education, and the five Santa Cruz County Supervisors. I turn now to you as the board ultimately charged with overseeing the SLVUSD on behalf of tax-paying citizens in our community. Regardless of where you stand on specific questions related to LGBTQ+ philosophy, beliefs, and life-style, I ask you to recognize the inappropriate nature of last month's display. I further ask that you take steps to ensure it is not repeated in the future. If you would like to pursue an extended, productive dialogue beyond this board meeting, I am ready to do so at your convenience. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,



P.J. Davis