

Testimony of Sarah E. Strange 4/12/07

Hi, my name is Sarah Strange, and I am a High School senior from Houston. But today my name is not important because I represent thousands of high school students across Texas. The freedom for religious expression is an integral part of our national identity. It's why we came to America. And today that right guaranteed by the Constitution is being denied to public school students across the state and the country.

Despite the "Prayer Guidance" regulation in effect via the U.S. Department of Education, students are being told that they cannot say Merry Christmas, much less anything distinctly religious such as the name of Jesus. In Katy ISD, it went so far that students weren't allowed to decorate with red or green, and instead of Christmas Break, they had "Winter Break." This is unconstitutional and wrong, as held by the Supreme Court in *Good News Club vs. Milford*.

Freedom of Speech extends to students' rights to express their private religious viewpoints just as much as they have the right to express secular views. I have been fortunate enough to attend private schools my whole life, at the great financial sacrifice of my family. Also, now that my mom is a single parent, I would be attending public school but for the generosity of others.

My friends and I have taken off from school today to come here because it is important to us. The passing of this bill will benefit every student in the great state of Texas by preserving their right to religious expression. The universality of this bill should appeal to everyone here because it effects not only my generation, but also the future generations of Texas students.

Not many students are given the opportunity to testify before you, so on behalf of all Texas High School students, thank you for your time, and I urge you to support HB3678, the Religious Viewpoint Antidiscrimination Act.



Sarah Strange