

PETITION, Thurs. Sept. 1, 2011, of Martin Rosenthal, TMM-9 & Co-chair of Brookline PAX
[www.brooklinepax.org](617-738-6621, martyros@world.std.com) & the *UNDERSIGNED*

Art. 1. Resolution: Classroom Pledge of Allegiance is Bad for Education, Diversity, & Patriotism

To see if the Town will adopt the following Resolution:

1. Whereas: Brookline has proud traditions cherishing not only educational excellence, but also diversity, e.g., for families of varied nationalities, cultures, religions, beliefs, and (dis)abilities;

2. Whereas: Our School Committee in 2011 made more "uniform" its prior but unevenly enforced "policy," to now mandate that each principal include at least weekly in her/his morning announcements in all classrooms a purportedly "voluntary" Pledge of Allegiance recitation, without clearly (or at all) guiding teachers, students, and/or parents as to how to proceed – a futile goal anyway, resulting in the opposite of "uniform" behavior, not unifying, but dividing, a near-spectacle that is even a disservice to "patriotism";

3. Whereas: The 2011 policy was based on a pre-existing one, in turn based on a moribund and toothless 1978 law, M.G.L. c.71, §69, passed after our SJC and AG Bellotti had each ruled it unconstitutional, and Gov. Dukakis' had therefore courageously vetoed it – because it compels teachers to lead a religiously-tinged Pledge, as does the 2011 policy for principals;

4. Whereas: For numerous Brookline parents the Pledge's overall thrust and/or specific content – when recited in kids' classrooms, "captive" settings, under auspices of the school's principal authority figure – even if purportedly "voluntary," is ill-advised for various heartfelt reasons:

A. Some parents' disagree with some or many of its specific pronouncements, e.g., religious beliefs (offensive in secular schools, anyway); in essence "my country right or wrong"; insensitivity to non-US-citizen families; seeming satisfaction about our accomplishments, like "liberty & justice for all," rather than stating them as aspirational ideals;

B. It is literally and psychologically a "loyalty-oath" [see www.answers.com/topic/loyalty-oath], reminiscent of McCarthyism or some horrific totalitarian regimes. During principals' announcements in classrooms, a purportedly "voluntary" Pledge is an oxymoron, a difficult "Hobson's Choice," especially for kids as young as six. It is inherently coercive, especially for younger kids. Groups like ACLU & ADL have urged that classroom Pledging has a "coercive effect, ... plac[ing] students in the untenable position of choosing between participating in an exercise with religious content or protesting";

C. Daily classroom Pledging even has "bullying" parallels. Brookline's new "Bullying Prevention-Intervention Plan" begins, "[I]n keeping with [our] core value of respect for human differences ...," and says, "'bullying' includes 'verbal ... expression ... that ... causes ... emotional harm ... [or] creates a hostile ... environment ...'; and, "[we] will treat each other in a civil manner, respect[ing] differences ... and support[ing] vulnerable populations";

D. One prominent School Committee member publicly acknowledges that "rote recitation of the Pledge advances nothing for learning or for civic values." Indeed, it is educationally un-sound – since it discourages "critical thinking" and in some ways teaches kids how not to be a good citizen in a diverse republic; and

5. Whereas: With divisiveness and nationwide media spotlight, from 1983 to 1992

Meeting annually rejected an allegedly "voluntary" Pledge as an official ritual, eventually in 1992 adopting a very successful compromise – offering a Pledge opportunity before convening.

Now, Therefore Be It Resolved: Town Meeting urges our School Committee to:

A. preferably, rescind its Pledge of Allegiance policy, and stop its recital in mandatory settings, it being neither legally required nor good for education, tolerance, or patriotism;

B. or, if a Pledge opportunity for purportedly "voluntary" kids – and parents – is nonetheless deemed educationally necessary and important, which Town Meeting disputes, then do it only in periodic *GROUP ASSEMBLIES*, which are less frequent and less coercive due to a lesser spotlight effect – and possibly adding a "patriotic" song (as does Town Meeting).

, or act on anything relative thereto.

[Petition of Martin Rosenthal, et al. (others as listed below and in attached sheets).]

PETITIONERS' EXPLANATION

Hopefully the Whereas clauses are self-explanatory. Though numerous civic leaders – e.g., a state Representative, some former School Committee members, some TMM's, and Brookline PAX – strenuously objected, the School Committee only slightly revised its former policy, now more firmly mandating at least weekly a purportedly "voluntary" classroom Pledge recitation. They cite no educational value, and held no public hearing to weigh community sentiment.

We the undersigned registered voters of Brookline hereby petition and request that the above article, "Resolution: Classroom Pledge of Allegiance is Bad for Education, Diversity, & Patriotism," be placed on the warrant for the next Town Meeting.

Name (sign & print)	Address	Pct
1. <i>Martin Rosenthal</i> Martin Rosenthal	62 Columbia	9
2. <i>Helen S. Heller</i>	40 Abbotsford Rd	8
3. <i>Frank P. Smirgic</i>	42 Russell St	9
4. <i>Arthur Y. [unclear]</i> (Korean)	43 Allerton St	5
5. <i>James W. Schleinger</i>	215 Clark Road	12
6. <i>Perry Kwan</i>	61 Highland Rd.	5
7. <i>Barbara Brown</i>	44 Waverly St	6
8. <i>Leif G. Guis</i>	11 Gardner R	12
9. <i>Frank W. [unclear]</i>	8 Bowker St	4

ADDITIONAL SIGNATURES ON ATTACHED SHEETS

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Names (sign & print) [continued list*]	Address	Pct
Alyson's - Alyssa Naim	60 Columbia St.	9
Diagn Tyndal	60 Columbia St	9
Judy Newman	# 2 Columbia St.	9
Martha A. Farlow	8 BOWKER ST.	1

***ADDITIONAL SIGNATURES TO INITIAL LIST ON ATTACHED SHEETS**

MR1 Pledge, FF final, addtm1 signers.doc

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