

Bold High School Student Battles Atheist Attack on Her Rights

Samantha Jones, a high school student in New Jersey, is going to court to defend her right to say the Pledge of Allegiance, including the words “one nation under God.” Jones and her family filed a response to a lawsuit from an atheist association that seeks to prevent public school students from reciting the pledge in its entirety.

“When I stand up, put my hand over my heart and say the Pledge of Allegiance, I am recognizing that my rights come from God, not from the government,” said Jones, a senior at Highland Regional High School. “If anyone wants to remain silent, that is their right. But it is not their right to silence me.”

This is the second time the atheist group American Humanist Association has sued at the state level. Their first suit, raising identical claims, was unanimously rejected by Massachusetts’ highest court earlier this year.

When the Jones family found out about the lawsuit against the pledge, they sought to intervene to defend their children’s rights. A New Jersey state court recently allowed them to join the case. They are represented by the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty. Also allowed to intervene in the case are the Knights of Columbus, the world’s largest Catholic fraternal organization and one of the pledge’s historic defenders, along with the American Legion.

“The pledge is not a religious creed or a prayer. It is a statement of our nation’s political philosophy that rights come not from the state but from something higher—as our Declaration of Independence puts it, ‘Nature’s God,’” said Kristina Arriaga, executive director of the Becket Fund.

“We are confident that the court will uphold the right to say the pledge in its entirety.”

The Becket Fund has successfully defended the Pledge of Allegiance at the federal and state levels. Courts have pointed out that the pledge is a voluntary patriotic exercise that teaches American history and civics, and that no schoolchild is required to recite the Pledge.