

JACL

Midwest Office

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Mr. Ed Richards, Jr.
Superintendent
Terrebonne Parish School District
201 Stadium Drive
Houma, LA 70360

Dear Superintendent Richards:

The controversy surrounding the recent commencement speeches at Ellender High School raise serious concerns if the Terrebonne Parish schools consider a policy that would require commencement speakers to speak solely in English.

It is deeply troubling that the Parish School Board would think to censor students for their bilingual abilities, especially within a society that celebrates its multicultural roots. We needn't feel threatened by displays of linguistic diversity when it's abundantly clear that English is the predominant language for communication and commerce in our nation.

Hue Vo, Ellender's co-valedictorian, said it best by saying, "Ellender is very diverse. We have many cultures there. They encourage us to be an individual. That's why I love Ellender. It helped me be an Asian American and not be ashamed of it because no one judged me." In all respects, it appears that Ellender High School provided an environment that nurtures and respects diversity, which, if it did nothing else, it made this individual a better person.

The Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) urges that the Terrebonne Parish schools reject proposals that require commencement speakers to speak only in English. It is important to promote tolerance of diversity and an appreciation for linguistic ability rather than straying toward a discriminatory policy.

Sincerely,

William Yoshino
Midwest Director
Japanese American Citizens League