



Taking on the Pledge of Allegiance: The News Media and Michael Newdow's Constitutional Challenge

Ronald Bishop

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Taking on the Pledge of Allegiance explores the landmark lawsuit filed by avowed atheist Michael Newdow against the Elk Grove Unified School District in California, in which he claimed the words under God in the Pledge of Allegiance amounted to an unconstitutional endorsement of religion. Newdow's original suit was ignored by the public and the news media until June 26, 2002, when the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the Pledge of Allegiance was unconstitutional. This decision touched off a firestorm of negative reaction, both from politicians and from the public. The U.S. Supreme Court eventually overturned the ruling on Flag Day 2004.

This book contains interviews with many of the parties involved, including Newdow and journalists who covered the case. Ronald Bishop examines how the news media marginalized Newdow after the Ninth Circuit's ruling acting as a guard dog for the government and for the ideas supposedly at the ideological heart of America by framing the decision as an aberration, a radical act by a hopelessly liberal federal circuit court. Bishop concludes that journalists relegated Newdow to a rhetorical protest zone he was heard, but from a safe distance."

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