

# Alaska Airlines' Prayer Cards – Who's Offended?

✘ Alaska Airlines is my favorite carrier. They have great customer service, an extremely generous mileage plan and routes to the places I regularly travel.

For the past 30 years, Alaska has handed out prayer cards with its meals. They were simple cards quoting passages from Psalms printed over lovely photographs. Since 2006, when the airline stopped offering meals to customers in the main cabin, the cards have only appeared on meal trays in first class.

Well, not anymore. Alaska has made a business decision, starting in February, not to include the cards with meals. Why, you ask?

Apparently, it used to receive more positive than negative comments but the times, they are a changin'. The tide has turned.

Airline spokesman, Bobbie Egan, said, "After carefully considering all sides, it was agreed that eliminating the cards was the right thing to do.

"Religious beliefs are deeply personal and sharing them with others is an individual choice," said the email I received signed by both airline CEO Bill Ayer and President Brad Tilden. The email said some of its customers enjoyed the cards but others were offended by them.

Now I understand this was a business decision made by Alaska Airlines. That's fine.

But, really. C'mon. Someone is actually offended by a card with a prayer on it? If you don't like, turn it over, or put it in the front seat pocket. Or give it back to the flight

attendant. I'd really like to know who is offended by this gesture.

I'm not sure if the "offended persons" believe in God but statistics now show the percentage of non-religion affiliated people is on the rise in this country. There are still five million Jews in this country and the majority of Americans still identify themselves as Christians. So, who, exactly, is opposing this innocuous little card quoting from the Old Testament? Apparently a small minority of people who are the most vocal and who are successfully imposing their will on the majority, that's who.

Although I consider myself a Christian, my roots are in Roman Catholicism. I've had Jehovah Witnesses come to my door over the years and I simply say, "Thank you" and accept their little pamphlets. I've even thumbed through the pages in years past. Mormon missionaries regularly come by and I do the same thing. I tell them politely, "My husband and I are Christians and we're happy in our faith, but thank you." I don't put a sign on my door saying "No Religious Proselytizing Allowed."

Even if someone doesn't give thanks to God or a higher power for their food, isn't this a quiet reminder to at least thank the flight attendant for bringing the tray? I've seen many people accept their food and not say thank you to the flight attendant – both in first class and in the main cabin.

And people don't think there is a secular war aimed at religion in this country?

Every day I read about another battle being waged. The President recently attempted to mandate that religious employers, opposed to most forms of birth control, cover contraception in health plans – a direct attack on the First Amendment and religious freedom.

Pressure is placed on retailers to prohibit their employees from saying "Merry Christmas" to their patrons.

Just this past month, the Department of Education of NY has banned local church congregations utilizing space in the state's public schools for services even though the congregations pay rent.

And the battles go on and on and on...

And with the elimination of Alaska Airlines' prayer cards, chalk up one more for the secularists.

Unfortunately, I get where to this going...

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## **Tolerance is Now a One-Way Street**

☒ Debate. According to my dictionary, it means to deliberate, consider, to engage in argument by discussing opposing points, to engage in a formal discussion or argument.

Bottom line. There has to be opposing viewpoints in order to have a debate otherwise you have a one-sided conversation.

Well, apparently, officials in the Shawano School District in Wisconsin don't seem to understand this simple concept.

Fifteen-year old Brandon Wegner was asked to write an op-ed piece for the school newspaper, "The Hawk's Post," about whether homosexuals should be allowed to adopt. He wrote the opposition; Maddie Marquardt wrote the piece in favor. You can [click here](#) to read both articles.

Well, after the op-ed was published, Brandon was allegedly censored, threatened with suspension and called ignorant by

the superintendent of the School District, according to an attorney representing the child. A statement by the superintendent read, "Offensive articles cultivating a negative environment of disrespect are not appropriate or condoned by the Shawano School District. We sincerely apologize to anyone we may have offended and are taking steps to prevent items of this nature from happening in the future."

Any controversial topic will invite a heated discussion. So, I guess, what the superintendent is saying is that he will make sure that no topic of significant value is ever debated again. I guess he'll try and limit debate in "The Hawk's Post" to topics like, "Which Do You Prefer, Snickers or Milky Ways?" "Coke or Pepsi?" or "Should the Cafeteria Be Painted?" How about, "Green or blue decorations for the Prom?" On second thought, let's leave that one out because it may raise the ire of Irish folks and Smurfs.

The problem started when a homosexual couple, whose child attended the high school, complained. The school immediately issued an apology and stated Brandon's opinion was a "form of bullying and disrespect."

Now, I don't really care what anyone's opinion is about homosexuals adopting children. That's not the issue. The issue is that Brandon was invited to write an op-ed piece. Maddie wrote a piece in support of homosexual adoptions and Brandon wrote the opposition. That's why it's called a debate.

The superintendent's intolerance reminded me of Saturday Night Live's glory days when it did the Point/Counterpoint with Jane Curtin and Dan Akroyd. Jane would start out with, "Dan, you self-important pig..." and Dan would continue with "Jane, you magnificently ignorant slut..." and then each went on with their opinion.

Every issue will have at least two sides and if you don't want

to hear an opposing viewpoint, then don't invite a dialogue.

According to Brandon's attorney, "The superintendent wants everyone to accept homosexuality as normative and homosexual adoption as something that should be standard practices. In doing so, he's belittling the views and the biblical views of many people across this country. He is playing a zero-sum game. He's not interested in dialogue. He wants to cram his view down the throat of everyone else and will not tolerate an opposing viewpoint."

Whether you agree with Brandon's position is not the issue. He was asked by a teacher to take the opposing view of a controversial issue. He did what he was asked to do and is then punished? Where's this kid's First Amendment rights? How is this bullying? How is this disrespectful?

Years ago, a very dear friend of mine said, "opinions are like ass\*#@s; everyone has one; no one wants another one." The older I get, the wiser those words become.

Brandon will either be emboldened from this experience and hone his debating skills or will shrink away and never venture to offer his opinion again. I hope he chooses the former. In today's college environment, he'll need to have a very strong core belief system in order to survive the liberal groupthink mentality.

In today's politically correct world, it's perfectly okay for Samuel L. Jackson to say he voted for President Obama because he's black yet not be called a racist; but I'm a racist because I didn't vote for President Obama based on his policies.

I'm a homophobe because I oppose homosexual marriage.

I'm a racist because I oppose unfettered illegal immigration.

I'm old-fashioned (or worse) because I believe children should

not be born out of wedlock.

I'm a racist because I support many of the ideas of the Tea Party movement.

I'm sexist because I'm pro-life.

I'm a racist because I think the TSA should be profiling people at the airport and not hassling grandmothers in wheelchairs and looking in babies' diapers.

I've got a neurological disorder (according to some people) because I believe in God.

Brandon has learned a very good lesson. Where our educational system was once considered a place for the free flow of ideas and viewpoints, it has now become, with every story I read, the "epitome of intolerance."

I don't get it, but if you do, God bless you.