



NACKEY S. LOEB SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATIONS

Censured school member to receive Nackey Loeb First Amendment Award

MANCHESTER _ A ConVal School Board member who was censured for speaking out against a proposed school bond that the board had endorsed has been chosen as this year's recipient of the Nackey S. Loeb First Amendment Award.

Gail Pierson Cromwell, Temple's representative on the regional school board, voted against the \$4.9 million proposal and opposed it in letters to newspapers and public meetings in her town. As a result, the board voted last spring to censure her. Voters narrowly defeated the proposal.

"When you join the board, you do not leave your First Amendment rights at the door," Cromwell said at the time. "You have a duty to inform the people."

Cromwell will be recognized at the non-profit school's First Amendment Awards event on Oct. 22 at the Capitol Center for the Arts, featuring Fox News commentator, columnist and author Bill O'Reilly.

"I decided I was not going to let this bother me," Cromwell said of the censure. "I stayed right there on the job and continue to voice my opinions about mostly budget issues that I feel particularly qualified to speak on. I wasn't about to let them intimidate me."

The board approved the censure on an 8-2 vote, saying Cromwell violated a board policy against taking private action that would compromise the board or school administration. It also said her actions "caused confusion that compromised the school board's efforts to accurately inform the voters."

Cromwell, who holds a Ph.D in economics, disagrees, saying voters understand the importance of "full information and free speech" about the issues they vote on.

"It's not confusing to learn there are pros and cons. They can sort it out. What's confusing is when they get only a partial, hyped-up view of one side," she said after learning she had been chosen to receive the 8th annual First Amendment Award.

Temple Selectman Chairman John Kieley asked the School Board to apologize to Cromwell, saying there was no rule stating a representative only had a voice if they agreed with the board. There was no apology.

Cromwell, 69, was elected to the board in 2005. The former assistant professor of economics at Harvard and MIT worked as an investment portfolio manager for 30 years. She said she is not sure if she will seek re-election next year.

As with past recipients, Cromwell was chosen from nominations submitted by the public. She will receive \$1,500 and a bronze eagle sculpture created by Mrs. Loeb and commissioned by her daughters, Nackey Scagliotti and Edith Tomasko.

First Amendment Award judges are: Rod Doherty, Executive Editor of Foster's Daily Democrat; Retired N.H. Supreme Court Justice Richard Galway; Tami Plyler, Executive Editor of the New Hampshire Union Leader; Atty. Gregory Sullivan, Malloy & Sullivan; and previous First Amendment recipients: John Howe, former Executive Editor of The Laconia Citizen; and Londonderry High School Journalism Advisor Mary Lukas.

Other previous recipients, all selected for dedication to the First Amendment or actions that exemplify the freedoms it guarantees, are: former New Hampshire Attorney General Philip McLaughlin, former Keene Sentinel Executive Editor Thomas F. Kearney, political activist and former legislator Daniel Hughes, Dover City Councilor David Scott and First Amendment Attorney William Chapman

O'Reilly is host of The O'Reilly Factor, America's most popular cable news program. He writes a column in more than 300 newspapers. His latest book, "Pinheads and Patriots," was released Sept. 14.

Funds raised at the event enable the school to offer free classes on topics including the First Amendment; news, sports, editorial, political and feature writing; social media, photography and broadcasting. More than 4,000 people have participated in classes, workshops and school-sponsored events.

Led by presenting sponsor Wheelabrator Technologies, the First Amendment Awards are backed by many business, civic and media leaders. Other major supporters include: PSNH, People's United Bank, Amoskeag Beverages, Bank of America, TD Charitable Foundation, The Common Man Family of Restaurants, Citizens Bank, Mosse and Mosse Associates, National Grid, Thermo Fisher Scientific, BAE Systems, The Dupont Group, Lincoln Financial Group, Sean Mahoney, NextEra Energy Seabrook Station, SilverTech, Fidelity Investments and Dan Hughes.

The late Nackey S. Loeb, president and publisher of the New Hampshire Union Leader, founded the school in 1999 to promote understanding and appreciation of the First Amendment and to foster interest, integrity and excellence in journalism and other forms of communication.

Tickets are \$50 for the First Amendment event and \$75 for the event and a reception, including a brief appearance by O'Reilly. They are available at www.ccanh.com or by calling the Capitol Center for the Arts box office at 225-1111. Sponsorship information is available at 627-0005.

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