

May 9, 2008

Chancellor Mark S. Wrighton
Washington University in St. Louis
One Brookings Drive
St. Louis, MO 63130

Dear Chancellor Wrighton,

We are extremely disappointed that the University has chosen to honor Phyllis Schlafly with an honorary degree at this spring's commencement ceremony.

We are fully committed to the principle of free speech, and we believe the University should encourage a discussion of diverse viewpoints. Commencement, however, is first and foremost a time of celebration of the intellectual accomplishments of our students. It is, we believe, a disservice to those whom we honor to inject into the proceedings a person who has devoted her life to staking out and promoting polarizing, anti-intellectual positions. Northwestern University recently had the good sense to rescind its honorary degree offer to Jeremiah Wright. Washington University should do no less with the offer to Ms. Schlafly.

An even more important reason to rescind the degree offer to Ms. Schlafly is that her repeatedly expressed views are antithetical to some of the most fundamental principles for which this University stands.

Let us be clear. We are not talking about mere political disagreements - including her most famous political success, the defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment. Although many of us promoted the amendment, we readily acknowledge that reasonable people can disagree over the question whether - particularly in light of the existing Equal Protection Clause - a specific constitutional amendment was the ideal way to pursue the objective of equality, to which this University is firmly committed.

Our objection to honoring Ms. Schlafly instead stems from the fact that she has devoted her career to demagoguery and anti-intellectualism in the pursuit of her political agenda. She has berated scientific inquiry; apart from her particular stance on the Equal Rights Amendment, she has demonstrated a lack of concern for - and sometimes outright bigotry toward - not only women, but gays and lesbians; and she has led campaigns to undermine the independence of the judiciary. Here are only a few examples:

Ms. Schlafly has repeatedly promoted the teaching of creationism and intelligent design in the public schools. She objects to "force-feeding public schoolchildren with the theory of evolution" and refers to those who believe in evolution as "atheists." Moreover, she consistently frames evolution as a political issue, instead of a scientific one. Ms. Schlafly

wrote in 2006, for example, that “Liberals see the political value to teaching evolution in school, as it makes teachers and children think they are no more special than animals. Childhood joy and ambition can turn into depression as children learn to reject that they were created in the image of God.”

Ms. Schlafly consistently resorts to feminism-bashing rhetoric without engaging in reasoned discussions about the role of women in American society; she just labels people who don't share her precise priorities as evil feminists. Ms. Schlafly wrote in 1994 of the recently confirmed United States Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg that her “writings betray her as a radical, doctrinaire feminist, far out of the mainstream. All evidence indicates that she shares the chip-on-the-shoulder radical feminist view that American women have endured centuries of oppression and mistreatment from men.” More recently, Ms. Schlafly wrote in 2006 that federal money disbursed to states under the Violence Against Women Act “is used by anti-male feminists to train judges, prosecutors and the police in the feminist myths that domestic violence is a contagious epidemic, and that men are naturally batterers and women are naturally victims.”

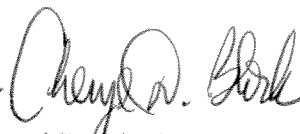
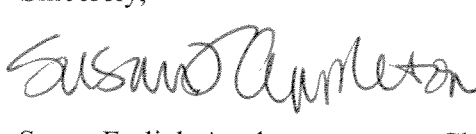
Ms. Schlafly repeatedly criticizes “the gay and lesbian agenda.” She has opposed all attempts to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in the workplace. With respect to a proposed law designed to prohibit discrimination against gay and lesbian school teachers, Ms. Schlafly wrote: “Surely the right of parents to control the education of their children is a right of a higher order than any alleged right of, say, the two college-educated lesbian members of the Symbionese Liberation Army to teach our young people.” Ms. Schlafly has also repeatedly denied the dignity of gays and lesbians with demagoguery such as her statement that homosexuality is “like prostitution. Nobody can stop you if you want to be a prostitute or to patronize a prostitute, but you are not going to force us to say that it is morally acceptable.”

Finally, as lawyers and law professors, we are deeply disturbed by Ms. Schlafly's similarly anti-intellectual campaign against an independent judiciary. Instead of engaging in reasoned debate, she regularly uses the label “activist” to decry judges and decisions with which she happens to disagree. When United States Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote an opinion declaring the death penalty unconstitutional as applied to minors, Ms. Schlafly declared that the opinion was a “good ground for impeachment.” Ms. Schlafly advocated that judicial independence also be abolished here in Missouri, as she actively participated in the attempt to unseat Missouri Supreme Court Judge Rick Teitelman because of the substance of his judicial decisions.

We call on the University to rescind its offer of an honorary degree to Ms. Schlafly. If the University insists on honoring Ms. Schlafly at this year's commencement, we are

committed to disassociating ourselves from that decision. We will celebrate and honor our students, but we will not share the platform with Ms. Schlafly or otherwise support her agenda with our silence. Instead, we will support those students who are leading a protest against Ms. Schlafly's honorary degree. We are deeply disappointed that the University in which we teach is honoring an individual whose professed values are so antithetical to those of the University. We will convey that disappointment to our students and their parents.

Sincerely,



Susan Frelich Appleton
Lemma Barkeloo and Phoebe
Couzins Professor of Law

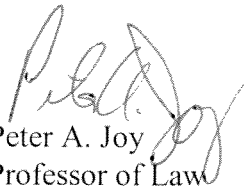
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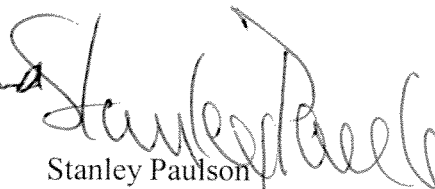
D. Bruce LaPierre
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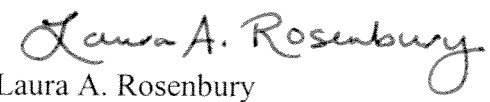
Charles R. McManis
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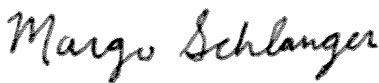
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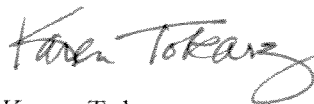
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