Exeter Union High School commencement ceremony won't include prayer |...aliatimesdelta.com | Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register



6/9/10 3:02 PM

"If the already scheduled student speaker chooses

to pray, that's protected under the First Amendment ," she said.

Kathleen Brooks, an Exeter Union High English teacher who said she was speaking as a parent, also supports prayer at the ceremony.

"I believe that as a government, as a country, we have to recognize the rights of the minority," she said. "But not necessarily by ignoring the rights of the majority."

Others said they wanted the conflict to end so students could enjoy a peaceful graduation.

Margie Reed, who works at the school and whose son is a senior, thanked the board for showing "the courage to do what you know has to be done."

"As Christians, we do need to fight this," she said, "but not on graduation night."

# **Ballots Not Counted**

Trustees voted earlier this year to cancel the prayer, then decided to let seniors vote on the matter. Seniors voted last week but the ballots were not counted and will be destroyed, Superintendent Renee Whitson said.

"I think they should have stuck with their original decision, rather than deciding that students should vote on it," said Pam Pescosolido, mother of a junior.

Whitson said after the meeting that the board "worked very hard and long considering the law."

"We do have a responsibility to be fair and we want to have equal respect for all," she said.

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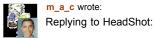
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