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# AMERICA FIGHTS BACK

## State university library bans American pride stickers

FORT MYERS – While many Americans display patriotic messages in the wake of last week's terrorist attacks, librarians at one Florida university have been hushed.

Library Director Cathy Hoeth told her staff not to wear "I'm proud to be an American" stickers because they might offend the 200 foreign students at Florida Gulf Coast University in Fort Myers.

That policy may violate the staff's rights to free speech, said Randall Marshall, legal director for the American Civil Liberties Union of Florida.

"The problem is that employees don't give up their constitutional rights merely because they're in their work place," Marshall told the Naples Daily News. "There is a balance to be struck here between the right of individuals to express themselves and the orderly operation of the public employer's business."

Hoeth said staff members could put the stickers on computers or in their cubicles. But she asked them not to wear them at the reference desk where the stickers could offend library users.

"We're doing everything we can to meet FGCU's standards of civility and tolerance," Hoeth said. "As a librarian, I want the highest respect for everyone coming to the desk."

She prefers staff wear ribbons or flags without printed words on them, said Provost Brad Bartel.

The policy was a "judgment call" by the library director, Bartel said, because the school had no previous policies on this issue.

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