



October 25, 2017

Chuck Warpehoski
Ann Arbor City Council

Members of the Ann Arbor City Council, as well as many professional athletes, have been criticized for kneeling during the Pledge of Allegiance. The purpose of kneeling is to protest and bring attention to police misconduct and violence faced by Black people and other people of color. These people have been maligned, accused of being unpatriotic and disrespecting active duty service members and veterans.

Veterans for Peace, Chapter 93, supports every person's right to freedom of speech. To serve in the U.S. armed forces, our military veteran members were required to take a pledge to defend the Constitution of the United States. One of the most closely held rights recognized in the Bill of Rights is the free exercise of speech.

Veterans for Peace also recognizes that just as people have the right to stand or not stand for the national anthem, people have the right to criticize the way others have chosen to express themselves. But to question people's patriotism and use smear tactics to quiet them is in direct contradiction to the spirit of the right to freedom of expression. These acts of protest are political acts to register discontent with the actions of our government. It is a nonviolent act that demands positive change for a better future for all of us. It is exactly the kind of speech the First Amendment was designed to protect and as veterans we applaud the use of these rights for the cause of equality and justice; rights and ideals that we are told we served to defend.

Chuck, we defend your freedom to express your beliefs during the Pledge of Allegiance, especially since you say kneeling for the Pledge ". . . for me it was with the same spirit of respect as kneeling in prayer". We will continue to support you, and work with you to bring attention to injustice.

Board of Directors

The Utah Phillips - J. David Singer Chapter 93

Veterans for Peace