

Arrest of Cindy Sheehan at State of the Union Address

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Rep. Lynn Woolsey Denounces Arrest of Cindy Sheehan, Who Vows to Sue

Cindy Sheehan was a guest of U.S. Rep. Lynn Woolsey for the State of the Union Address, and the Congresswoman is not happy about the way her guest was treated.

“Since when is free speech conditional on whether you agree with the President?” Rep. Woolsey asked.

Capitol police dragged Sheehan out of the gallery for wearing a shirt that said: “2245 Dead. How many more.” She was arrested for “unlawful conduct,” and was held for four hours, Sheehan says [1].

“Cindy Sheehan, who gave her own flesh and blood for this disastrous war, did not violate any rules of the House of Representatives. She merely wore a shirt that highlighted the human cost of the Iraq War and expressed a view different than that of the President,” Rep. Woolsey said. “Free speech and the First Amendment exist to protect dissenting statements like Ms. Sheehan’s.” (Woolsey italicized the word “exist” in her press release.)

Here is Cindy Sheehan’s account of what happened, after she had already passed through security twice: “My ticket was in the 5th gallery, front row, fourth seat in,” she wrote on buzzflash. “The person who in a few minutes was to arrest me helped me to my seat. I had just sat down and I was warm from climbing three flights of stairs back up from the bathroom so I unzipped my jacket. I turned to the right to take my left arm out, when the same officer saw my shirt and yelled: ‘Protester!’ He then ran over to me, hauled me out of my seat, and roughly (with my hands behind my back) shoved me up the stairs.”

Sgt. Kimberly Schneider in the public information office of the Capitol Police did not provide direct comment to The Progressive, but she told the AP that Sheehan was warned that that she could not wear such a display “but did not respond.”

Sheehan denies that. “I was never told that I couldn’t wear that shirt into the Congress,” she said. “I was never asked to take it off or zip my jacket back up.”

Sheehan vows to sue.

“I have some lawyers looking into filing a First Amendment lawsuit against the government for what happened,” she wrote. “I will file it. It is time to take our freedoms and our country

back.”

In a related story, Beverly Young, the wife of Rep. C.W. Bill Young of Florida, says she was also evicted from the event for having a shirt on that said, “Support the Troops Defending Our Freedoms,” according to the St. Petersburg Times [2].

“They said I was protesting,” she told the paper. “I said, ‘Read my shirt. It is not a protest.’ They said, ‘We consider that a protest.’ I said, ‘Then you are an idiot.’ ”

Sgt. Schneider told the paper that Young “was not ejected from the gallery. She did leave on her own.”

Representative Young was not pleased. “I just called the chief of police and asked him to get his tail over here,” he told the paper.

“This is not acceptable.”

Links:

[1] <http://www.buzzflash.com/contributors/06/02/con06043.html>

[2] http://www.sptimes.com/2006/02/01/news_pf/Worldandnation/T_shirt_earns_exit_fr.shtml

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