

"Holiday Tree" Causes Outrage Among Many, Including MHS Students

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Rhode Island Governor Lincoln Chafee shocked many, including me, when he announced a couple of weeks ago that the 17-foot spruce standing in the State House is a “holiday tree,” not a “Christmas tree.” Chafee claims that he is honoring Roger Williams by removing the Christmas out of the tree because Williams founded the state in 1636 on the basis of freedom of religion.

For me, this is my favorite time of the year. The music, the presents, the food – and the tree. Attempting to rename the Christmas tree is an unreasonable idea that will most definitely not catch on. I am not going to start calling my tree a “holiday tree,” and I’m sure many other people and businesses that sell these trees would agree.

It has been called a Christmas tree for as long as anyone can remember. I do not consider myself a person rooted in tradition, but why change something that has served as a symbol of a cheerful holiday for so long?

It makes sense to call this time of year the holiday season because it includes holidays from a few different religions and cultures. However, there is no reason to change the name of the tree because it is specific to Christmas. I don’t think people who do not celebrate Christmas get offended when people say “Christmas tree,” just like people who do not celebrate Hanukah would not approve of when people say “menorah.”

Shannon Abel, a senior at Marblehead High School who celebrates the holiday, agrees. “I think it’s dumb. It’s a Christmas tree. Everyone knows that. There’s no point in changing that now, especial because it’s specifically for Christmas.”

Zach Romanovsky, also a senior but who celebrates Hanukah, agrees as well. “I think it’s stupid. I’m not going to start calling my Hanukah bush a holiday bush.”

Governor Chafee’s office has received over 3,500 phone calls from people who are upset over his announcement and only 92 calls from those who support it (according to his spokeswoman). Dozens of people also attended the annual tree lighting and protested his words by singing the carol “Oh Christmas Tree.” After this, Chafee said, “If it’s in my house it’s a Christmas tree, but when I’m representing all of Rhode Island I have to be respectful of everyone. Now we can get back to next year’s budget...with pleasure.”

Clearly, the governor’s idea will not stick and the “Christmas tree” will always be known as just that. Efforts for inclusion of other religions seem vain, and frankly, other religions aren’t going to identify with the Christmas tree. “Oh Christmas Tree” won’t be having any lyric changes soon.