

# Political Boycotts with Taxpayer Money? Just Don't Do It

The latest round of American boycott/buycott enthusiasm centers on Nike's new marketing campaign, which features former San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick — central figure of the “take a knee” protest movement in the National Football League and elsewhere.

Angry (and not very smart) anti-Kaepernick Nike customers are publicly burning their expensive Nike shoes and sharing the videos on social media as they vow to never buy the brand again. But pro-Kaepernick customers (and the apathetic) have boosted boosted the brand's sales and driven its stock to an all-time high.

All well and good. One nice thing about markets is that they're hyper-democracies in which we all get to vote with our patronage, every day and with every purchase.

Unfortunately, some people think they're entitled to vote with other people's dollars. Marshall Fisher, head of Mississippi's Department of Public Safety, is one such.

Fisher recently announced that the state police he supervises will no longer buy Nike products, telling the Associated Press that “I will not support vendors who do not support law enforcement and our military.”

The state's governor, Phil Bryant, supports Fisher's position on the matter, slamming Nike as “a company that pays an individual who has slandered our fine men and women in law enforcement.”

OK, so this may be something of an empty gesture as far as the market is concerned. Does the Mississippi Highway Patrol even purchase athletic shoes and apparel? If so, such purchases hopefully constitute a drop in the bucket of DPS's \$150-million-plus annual budget.

On the other hand, if Marshall Fisher and Phil Bryant want to make political statements with their purchases, they should cover such costs out of their own pockets instead of sticking Mississippi's taxpayers with the check.

Fisher and Bryant are virtue signaling. They're chasing political support from “law and order” voters and the law enforcement lobby. Maybe that's good politics. I have a couple of questions, though:

If the quality of a DPS-provided shoe makes a life-or-death difference to some situation a Mississippi Highway Patrol officer gets into, and if Nike's offering was the best for that situation, what words of comfort will Fisher and Bryant offer the loved ones of a dead cop

who went into that situation wearing inferior footwear?

And if the quality of DPS-provided shoes make no such difference, why wasn't DPS being fiscally responsible and doing its shoe-shopping at Walmart in the first place?