

SB0150



103RD GENERAL ASSEMBLY

State of Illinois

2023 and 2024

SB0150

Introduced 1/25/2023, by Sen. Tom Bennett

SYNOPSIS AS INTRODUCED:

New Act

Creates the Campus Free Speech Act. Requires the governing board of each public university and community college to develop and adopt a policy on free expression; sets forth what the policy must contain. Requires the Board of Higher Education to create a Committee on Free Expression to issue an annual report. Requires public institutions of higher education to include in their freshman orientation programs a section describing to all students the policies and rules regarding free expression that are consistent with the Act. Contains provisions concerning rules, construction of the Act, and enforcement.

LRB103 26084 RJT 52439 b

STATE MANDATES
ACT MAY REQUIRE
REIMBURSEMENT

A BILL FOR

1 AN ACT concerning education.

2 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,**
3 **represented in the General Assembly:**

4 Section 1. Short title. This Act may be cited as the Campus
5 Free Speech Act.

6 Section 5. Legislative findings. The General Assembly
7 finds the following:

8 (1) Section 4 of Article I of the Illinois
9 Constitution recognizes that "all persons may speak, write
10 and publish freely, being responsible for the abuse of
11 that liberty. In trials for libel, both civil and
12 criminal, the truth, when published with good motives and
13 for justifiable ends, shall be a sufficient defense".

14 (2) Public institutions of higher education have
15 historically embraced a commitment to freedom of
16 expression in policy.

17 (3) In recent years, some public institutions of
18 higher education have abdicated their responsibility to
19 uphold free-speech principles, and these failures make it
20 appropriate for all public institutions of higher
21 education to restate and confirm their commitment in this
22 regard.

23 (4) In 1974, the Committee on Free Expression at Yale

1 University issued a statement known as the Woodward Report
2 that stands as a classic defense of free expression on
3 campuses; in 2015, the Committee on Freedom of Expression
4 at the University of Chicago issued a similar and widely
5 respected report; and in 1967, the Kalven Committee Report
6 of the University of Chicago articulated the principle of
7 institutional neutrality regarding political and social
8 issues and the essential role of such neutrality in
9 protecting freedom of thought and expression at
10 universities. The principles affirmed by these 3 highly
11 regarded reports are inspiring articulations of the
12 critical importance of free expression in higher
13 education.

14 (5) The General Assembly views freedom of expression
15 as being of critical importance and requires that each
16 public institution of higher education ensure free,
17 robust, and uninhibited debate and deliberation by
18 students of public institutions whether on or off campus.

19 (6) The General Assembly has determined that it is a
20 matter of statewide concern that all public institutions
21 of higher education officially recognize freedom of speech
22 as a fundamental right.

23 Section 10. Definition. In this Act, "public institution"
24 means a public university or public community college in this
25 State.

1 Section 15. Policy on free expression required. The board
2 of trustees of a public institution shall develop and adopt a
3 policy on free expression that contains, at least, the
4 following:

5 (1) A statement that the primary function of an
6 institution of higher education is the discovery,
7 improvement, transmission, and dissemination of knowledge
8 by means of research, teaching, discussion, and debate.
9 This statement shall provide that, to fulfill this
10 function, the institution must strive to ensure the
11 fullest degree of intellectual freedom and free
12 expression.

13 (2) A statement that it is not the proper role of the
14 institution to shield individuals from speech protected by
15 the First Amendment, including, without limitation, ideas
16 and opinions they find unwelcome, disagreeable, or even
17 deeply offensive.

18 (3) A statement that students and faculty have the
19 freedom to discuss any problem that presents itself, as
20 the First Amendment permits and within the limits of
21 reasonable viewpoint and content-neutral restrictions on
22 time, place, and manner of expression that are consistent
23 with this Act and that are necessary to achieve a
24 significant institutional interest; provided that these
25 restrictions are clear, are published, and provide ample

1 alternative means of expression. Students and faculty
2 shall be permitted to assemble and engage in spontaneous
3 expressive activity as long as the activity is not
4 unlawful and does not materially and substantially disrupt
5 the functioning of the institution, subject to the
6 requirements of this Act.

7 (4) A statement that the campuses of the institution
8 are open to speakers invited by students, student groups,
9 or members of the faculty without regard to viewpoint or
10 content of the proposed speech. If a fee applies to a
11 speech by an invited speaker, the inviting students,
12 student groups, or members of the faculty may not be
13 charged greater or lesser amounts based on the viewpoint,
14 content, or expected reaction to the speech.

15 (5) A statement that the outdoor public areas of
16 campuses of the institution are designated public forums,
17 open on the same terms to any speaker, and that any person
18 lawfully present on campus may leaflet, protest, or
19 demonstrate in those outdoor public areas.

20 (6) A provision setting forth the affirmative steps
21 that the institution will take to protect the free-speech
22 rights of invited speakers.

23 (7) A provision that, in all disciplinary cases
24 involving expressive conduct, students are entitled to a
25 disciplinary hearing under published procedures. When
26 suspension for longer than 30 days or expulsion are

1 potential penalties, students are entitled to the right to
2 active assistance of counsel.

3 (8) A statement that the institution may not take
4 action, as an institution, on the public policy
5 controversies of the day in such a way as to require
6 students or faculty to publicly espouse any given
7 viewpoint, provided that the institution may prescribe the
8 content of its curriculum.

9 (9) A statement that this policy supersedes and
10 nullifies any prior provisions in the policies and
11 regulations of the institution that restrict speech on
12 campus and are, therefore, inconsistent with this policy
13 on free expression. The institution shall remove or revise
14 any such provisions in its policies and regulations to
15 ensure compatibility with this policy on free expression.

16 Section 20. Committee on Free Expression.

17 (a) The Board of Higher Education shall create a single
18 Committee on Free Expression consisting of all of the
19 following members, all of whom shall serve without
20 compensation:

21 (1) One member representing the University of Illinois
22 at Urbana-Champaign, appointed by the university's board
23 of trustees.

24 (2) One member representing the University of Illinois
25 at Springfield, appointed by the university's board of

1 trustees.

2 (3) One member representing the University of Illinois
3 at Chicago, appointed by the university's board of
4 trustees.

5 (4) One member representing Southern Illinois
6 University at Carbondale, appointed by the university's
7 board of trustees.

8 (5) One member representing Southern Illinois
9 University at Edwardsville, appointed by the university's
10 board of trustees.

11 (6) One member representing Western Illinois
12 University, appointed by the university's board of
13 trustees.

14 (7) One member representing Eastern Illinois
15 University, appointed by the university's board of
16 trustees.

17 (8) One member representing Illinois State University,
18 appointed by the university's board of trustees.

19 (9) One member representing Northern Illinois
20 University, appointed by the university's board of
21 trustees.

22 (10) One member representing Chicago State University,
23 appointed by the university's board of trustees.

24 (11) One member representing Governors State
25 University, appointed by the university's board of
26 trustees.

1 (12) One member representing Northeastern Illinois
2 University, appointed by the university's board of
3 trustees.

4 (13) Three members representing public community
5 colleges, appointed by the Illinois Community College
6 Board at its discretion.

7 (14) Four members representing faculty members, 2
8 appointed by the Board of Higher Education and 2 appointed
9 by the Illinois Community College Board.

10 (15) Four members representing students, 2 appointed
11 by the Board of Higher Education and 2 appointed by the
12 Illinois Community College Board.

13 (b) The Committee on Free Expression shall meet initially
14 at the call of the Chairperson of the Board of Higher
15 Education, shall select one member as chairperson at its
16 initial meeting, and shall thereafter meet at the call of that
17 chairperson. The Board of Higher Education shall provide
18 administrative and other support to the Committee.

19 (c) The Committee on Free Expression shall report to the
20 public, the Board of Higher Education, the Governor, and the
21 General Assembly on September 1 of every year. The report
22 shall include all of the following:

23 (1) A description of any barriers to or disruptions of
24 free expression within public institutions.

25 (2) A description of the administrative handling and
26 discipline relating to these disruptions or barriers.

1 (3) A description of substantial difficulties,
2 controversies, or successes in maintaining a posture of
3 administrative and institutional neutrality with regard to
4 political or social issues.

5 (4) Any assessments, criticisms, commendations, or
6 recommendations the committee sees fit to include.

7 Section 25. Freshman orientation information. Public
8 institutions shall include in their freshman orientation
9 programs a section describing to all students the policies and
10 rules regarding free expression that are consistent with this
11 Act.

12 Section 30. Rules; construction of Act. The Board of
13 Higher Education is authorized to adopt rules to further the
14 purposes of the policies adopted pursuant to this Act. Nothing
15 in this Act shall be construed to prevent public institutions
16 from regulating student speech or activity that is prohibited
17 by other federal, State, or local laws.

18 Section 35. Enforcement. The following persons may bring
19 an action in a court of competent jurisdiction to enjoin any
20 violation of this Act or to recover reasonable court costs and
21 attorney's fees:

22 (1) The Attorney General.

23 (2) A person whose expressive rights are violated by a

1 violation of this Act.

2 In an action brought under this Act, if the court finds
3 that a violation of this Act occurred, the court may award the
4 aggrieved person injunctive relief for the violation and shall
5 award reasonable court costs and attorney's fees.