

There is nothing that's more important for a vibrant, successful republic than freedom of speech and freedom of expression. Unfortunately, some universities have chosen to stifle free speech on their campuses, flying in the face of their own purpose, learning. I urge you to support SB 40, entitled "Enact the Forming Open and Robust University Minds," to overturn that trend.

I just graduated from Ashland University, a private school, where we passed the Chicago Principles of Free Speech. Passing those principles wasn't an idea that the Board of Trustees came up with on their own. It was an effort spearheaded by the students, through our self-governing Student Senate.

I was lucky enough, during my time at Ashland, to be a part of several groups that each had a role to play in my understanding of those principles. First, the Ashbrook Center, which teaches American history, and helped me and other Ashbrook Scholars have a deep understanding of how the principles of free speech and conscience are rooted in our Founding. During my time with Young Americans for Liberty, a nonpartisan political group, I was lucky enough to organize several debates – both annual debates between student organizations and even a debate between candidates for the United States Congress. Last, my time actually in the Student Senate helped me see those principles of free expression and self-government play out in real time on the small scale of our little campus.

That history, those debates, and that experience drives me now, as I leave campus to join the workforce. More than simply equipping me with a piece of paper that says "summa cum laude" on it, my time at Ashland gave me a real *education*. That education went beyond the classroom and into the Student Center, the Convocation Center, the library, and out on the quad, where we were able to talk about controversial subjects and grow into better people because of it. Free speech is the basis of all of learning both in and out of the classroom. When administrators get to decide who can say what, when, and where, a college is on its way to losing education itself.

I want other students to have that same, transformative experience that I did, but not everyone is so lucky. Private colleges, of course, get to decide what they use their own property for, but public universities are a slightly different story. You, representatives of the state of Ohio, get to set the parameters within which administrators get to work, because those universities are bolstered by the state of Ohio.

It's your job to see that public universities comply with the principles of the American Founding, principles that I know run deep in the hearts of Ohioans like yourselves. Making sure that students can have the experiences I did without having to live in fear of their school administration stifling their expression is up to you. I'm confident that you'll make the right decision and pass this bill through your committee, to see that it gets a fair hearing among all the representatives.

Yours in Liberty,

Jacob Nestle