

## James McGuire Testimony

- For nearly 20 years, I have taught English and Communication courses at three Ohio universities, both private and state, as a part-time adjunct faculty member not under contract.
- I want to keep the possibility of future employment at all three universities totally unhindered, so I have intentionally chosen to not name them.
- I have truly enjoyed teaching in higher education and have respected and abided by university policies.
- There have been two incidents, however, in which my freedoms to set standards and to compose assignments in *my* course and classroom were challenged by administrators.
- In the first incident, I was able to defend my position that students should not be allowed to promote their sexual proclivities in spoken or written class assignments. In this case, persuading the administrator was successful, although it cooled our professional relationship.
- The second incident was more troubling, in that it brought to the fore the reality of campus political correctness, today known as "wokeness" and has had a lingering effect.
  - In a Public Speaking course, I offered students a list of nearly 80 pre-approved potential problem/solution topics to choose from as well as the option to propose another for approval.
  - One student took umbrage at one of the possible topics: "the immigration crisis at the U.S. Southern border."
  - The student claimed to be upset in that the topic discriminated against "people of color" and complained directly to an administrator, thereby bypassing me and the department Chair.
  - I was not allowed to know who the student was and not given a satisfactory reason why this course of action was taken.
  - Being intimidated by the situation and to extricate myself as soon as possible, I did not press what I thought would have been a fairer sequence in dealing with this situation.
  - I asked the administrator to extend my apology to the student for inadvertently presenting anything that caused the student to be upset. I explained that the topic had nothing to do with skin color or race, but illegal immigration.
  - I was not given the opportunity to discover whether the student was actually upset or whether something else had prompted the student's reaction.
  - In retrospect, in a good-faith attempt at subsidiarity, the student should have been sent to me, so that we could have worked things directly at the personal level.
- This incident caused a serious "chilling effect" in me in that, I have continually found myself self-censoring my written and spoken language, expecting student and administrator reactions like the one I just described.
- Since we Ohio adjuncts do not have the protection of collective bargaining, we each stand alone.
- Therefore, I welcome legislative initiatives such as HB151 that attempt to hold institutions of higher education more accountable in treating faculty and students more equitably.