



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on August 2, 2017

North Carolina Passes Goldwater Institute-based Campus Free Speech Bill

North Carolina is the latest state to take strides toward protecting free speech rights on public college campuses by passing legislation that prevents campus censorship. The Restore Campus Free Speech Act, which will affect a total of 17 colleges and universities in the University of North Carolina system, comes at a time when First Amendment rights of conservatives are being trampled on college campuses across the country.



The law passed with bipartisan support in the state House by a vote of 80 to 31, with 10 Democrats voting in favor of the bill. In the state Senate, however, the vote fell along party lines, with all 34 Republicans voting in support of the bill and all 11 Democrats against it.

According to the *Daily Wire*, the North Carolina bill is based on a [proposal](#) written by Stanley Kurtz of *National Review* and Jim Manly and Jonathan Butcher of Arizona's Goldwater Institute.

Writing for *National Review*, Kurtz [explains](#) that the bill will prevent college administrators from disinviting speakers and will create a disciplinary system for students who interfere with the free speech rights of others. In just the last year, for example, student protesters at college campuses have shut down free speech events with speakers such as Milo Yiannopoulos, Ann Coulter, Ben Shapiro, and Charles Murray.

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The legislation also authorizes a committee created by the board of regents to submit a yearly report to the public, regents, governor, and legislature on how free speech issues were addressed.

"This provision draws the Board of Governors into more active oversight of campus free speech and serves as a check on administrative abuse on issues like free-speech zones," Kurtz explains.

The North Carolina legislation is notable in that it is the first Goldwater Institute-based bill to have been passed, and as such, is the first to specifically address what the authors refer to as "shout-downs." They stated:

If the university refuses to discipline shout-downs in the wake of passage of this law, there will be consequences. For one thing, the annual report of the Board of Governors will either condemn the refusal to discipline, or the committee will itself be subject to public criticism. A negative report on the administrative handling of discipline would give the Board of Regents a reason to replace administrators, and legislators a reason to cut university funds.

The bill also reminds universities that as institutions, they are supposed to remain *neutral* on public controversial matters and encourage dialogue and a wide perspective of viewpoints. Kurtz notes that this means that the University of North Carolina would be discouraged from joining, for instance, the "fossil fuel" divestment [campaign](#) and the campaign to [boycott](#) Israel.



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While the bill achieves much of what the original Goldwater Institute proposal set out to do, Kurtz cites some concerns with the final version that passed in North Carolina. The university weakened a provision that designated public areas of the campus as “public forums,” which means that the university could potentially restrict free speech to specific zones. However, Kurtz contends that the annual committee report could serve as a check on potential abuses, including free-speech zones. Another provision struck from the proposal is one that would have suspended students who are twice found guilty of silencing others.

Still, the bill’s passage in North Carolina is an important step forward, as Kurtz reports that several other states are considering specifically Goldwater Institute-based bills.

Butcher adds, “It is great to see North Carolina legislators come together to ensure that college campuses are places where all people can respectfully express their thoughts and opinions without fear of reprisal. We hope North Carolina is at the forefront of many states that allow campus community members to have a voice — to speak, protest, distribute materials, and demonstrate without limiting others’ right to do the same.”

The Restore Campus Free Speech Act is now being considered in several states, including Illinois, Michigan, Texas, and Wisconsin — as well as California, where it could help to quell the First Amendment violations that have been taking place at Berkeley. At least four other states — Colorado, Tennessee, Utah, and Virginia — currently have campus free speech laws in place, according to *U.S. News & World Report*.

The passage of such laws could have a positive impact on college admissions as well. According to a July Pew Research Center [poll](#), 58 percent of Republicans now believe higher education has a negative effect on the country, driven largely by the dramatic cultural shift that has taken place on college campuses over the last several years. While institutions of higher education have seemingly always been a hotbed of liberalism and leftism, there appears to have been a shift in recent years even further left toward a more rabid, aggressive, anti-American, anti-white, anti-Christian ideology. This shift has resulted in an increase in admissions at some colleges with conservative leanings, as parents are in search of institutions that will not seek to indoctrinate or silence their young men and women who may have opposing viewpoints.



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