

# Free Speech

## The First Amendment of the Constitution

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

*"After all, if freedom of speech means anything, it means a willingness to stand and let people say things with which we disagree, and which do weary us considerably."*

*~ Zechariah Chafee, Professor of Law, Harvard Law School  
(Freedom of Speech, Harcourt, Brace and Howe. 1920, p.366)*

## Freedom of Speech, Expression and Assembly on Campus

**Public colleges and universities are often places where people exercise free speech rights guaranteed by the First Amendment.** Some individuals and groups may express opinions you find offensive or hurtful, sometimes deeply so. You may well wonder why your university would allow speech that is hateful. The university has an important constitutional duty to uphold the free speech rights of all people, without regard to content. Even though the views expressed may contradict the values of Kennesaw State University and its community members, the university holds the First Amendment guarantees of freedom of speech, freedom of expression and the right to assemble peaceably as essential rights of a free people.

## Suggestions for Responding to Objectionable Speech

- 1. Keep walking:** While speakers have the right to speak, you do not have to listen. You can change your route and choose to deny the speaker an audience for speech you find objectionable.
- 2. Hands off:** Whatever you do, make sure not to physically engage with speakers in any way. Some speakers may try to provoke a response from you. Touching, pushing or striking speakers can lead to criminal charges as well as charges under the Student Code of Conduct. Do not let speech which offends you turn into an arrest or charges against you.
- 3. Engagement:** If you choose to engage, do so in a respectful manner. Arguing and shouting is unlikely to change the opinions of speakers whose beliefs you do not share. Student Activities staff and the Dean of Students office can help with information about coordinating opportunities for counter speech.
- 4. Connect with others:** If you are concerned or upset by the views expressed by speakers on campus, get involved with student organizations and university departments that share your values and interests.

## RESOURCES

There are several places at KSU that can help answer your questions or concerns about free speech events:

**Dean of Students Office  
Carmichael Student Center**  
Room 274  
470-578-6367 (KSU-ODOS)  
deanofstudents@kennesaw.edu

**Division of Student Affairs -  
Marietta Campus**  
Wilson Student Center.  
Room 230  
470-578-7556  
wilsonstudentcenter@kennesaw.edu

**Division of Legal Affairs**  
Town Point, Suite 3400  
470-578-3562  
asklegal@kennesaw.edu

**For information about  
Kennesaw State's Freedom  
of Expression Policy visit:  
publicforum.kennesaw.edu**

