

STUDENT SENATE BILL 2024-1347

TITLE: Resolution Reaffirming the Importance of Free Expression and Civil Discourse at the University of Florida

AUTHOR(S): Student Body President John Brinkman

SPONSOR(S): Senate President Monish Vijayaraghavan, Senate President Pro Tempore Blake Cox, Judiciary Chairman Aaron Rubaii, Majority Party Leader Julia Seifer, Senator Allan Rivera Jaramillo

WHEREAS, the Florida Board of Governors established the Board’s Civil Discourse Initiative under Chair Syd Kitson during his January 2021 “State of the System” address [1]; and,

WHEREAS, Governor Timothy Cerio has stated that “Civil discourse, conducted civilly without fear of reprisal, is critical to free speech and ensuring academic and intellectual freedom – not just on our university campuses, but throughout our country” [1]; and,

WHEREAS, The Florida Board of Governors issued its Civil Discourse Final Report back in 2022 which outlines best practices for State University System institutions to promote respectful, open-minded, and tolerant discourse on campus [1]; and,

WHEREAS, The Faculty Senate of the University of Florida on March 21st, 2024 passed a Resolution on Civil Discourse, Free Expression, and Academic Freedom holding that “the core mission of the university, and its distinctive contribution to the American republic, is the pursuit of truth and advancement of knowledge through scholarship and teaching” [2]; and,

WHEREAS, a Core Value of the University of Florida is Freedom & Civility, meaning “the freedom to inquire and express ideas without condemnation, and to show respect for the right of others to do the same.” [3]; and,

WHEREAS, the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution provides a constitutional protection for individual liberties, including freedom of expression [4]; and,

WHEREAS, The University of Florida Student Senate has previously passed a resolution on the importance of free expression and civil discourse [5]; and,

WHEREAS, John Locke defines civil discourse as “a communication of thoughts and ideas by words, as may serve for the upholding common conversation and commerce, about the ordinary

affairs and conveniences of civil life, in the societies of men one amongst another.” [6]; then,

THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate reaffirms the belief that that individuals wishing to express ideas with which others may disagree must be free to do so without fear of being bullied, threatened, or silenced at the University of Florida.

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate reaffirms the belief that all members of our campus communities should have an equal ability to express their ideas and opinions while preserving campus order and security.

THEREFORE, LET IT FINALLY BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate thoroughly reaffirms and endorses the Florida Board of Governor’s Statement of Free Expression and commits to the principles of civil discourse.

Proviso: A copy of this resolution shall be sent to State University System Chancellor Ray Rodrigues, Florida Board of Governors Chair Brian Lamb, Florida Board of Governors Vice Chair Alan Levine, Governor Timothy Cerio of the Florida Board of Governors, and University of Florida President Ben Sasse.

[1] https://www.flbog.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/SPC_09_Civil-Discourse_Final_CE.pdf

[2] <https://fora.aa.ufl.edu/docs/78/2023-2024/Resolution%20on%20Civil%20Discourse.Feb.01.2024.pdf>

[3] <https://www.ufl.edu/about/core-values/#el-982472ea>

[4] https://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/first_amendment

[5] <https://sg.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Civil-Discourse-2022-1040.pdf>

[6] Locke, John. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.



Monish Vijayaraghavan
Senate President

6/10/24

Date