

Motion adopted on April 8, 1992 by the Executive Committee of the Milwaukee Jewish Council:

Since its founding in 1938, the Milwaukee Jewish Council has been a strong supporter of the Bill of Rights and especially of the First Amendment. The essence of our nation is derived from this basic guarantee of the freedoms of religion, speech and press as well as the right to peaceably assemble and petition for redress of grievances. In the past we have defended the exercise of free speech in many unpopular cases, often when the views of the speaker were offensive to us as Jews and as Americans.

This strong commitment to the equal application of freedom of speech to all people is our underlying approach when we evaluate the current controversy about the venue for speeches at Israel Independence Day events at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Union. As a matter of principle, opportunities for free speech for all sides of an issue should be maximized, especially on the campus of a university which is dedicated to the sifting and winnowing of ideas, the exploration of new viewpoints, and the free exchange of differing opinions.

We do not express a judgement concerning:

1. The specifics of the current controversy between the UWM administration and the Jewish student group TAGAR.
2. The constitutionality of the University's current regulations regarding the event TAGAR is planning.
3. Whether the views of TAGAR or the manner in which it expresses them promotes the goal of improving perceptions about Israel by the campus community.
4. The advisability of a lawsuit on the matter.

We express our opinion that:

1. Free speech is a goal which needs to be nurtured to the maximum extent, especially on a campus.
2. We regret that the University finds it necessary to take actions regulating the venue of free speech -- whether or not its policies and decisions are legal and constitutional.
3. The presence of counter-demonstrators should not be a criterion for deciding on the venue of free speech, since that might have the unintended effect of giving a third party the power to control the venue.
4. It is the obligation of the University to provide a safe

environment for the presentation of diverse viewpoints. For reasons of public safety, the University could consider adopting a policy to prohibit all speech from a particular location and apply this prohibition to all groups. We oppose a policy which allows some groups to speak at a specific location and others not to speak at that location, and having a governmental body such as UWM make those judgements.

5. The UWM Administration has proceeded in good faith to address the difficult balance between First Amendment rights and security concerns, but should reconsider this specific new approach to its policy.