
HOUSE BILL 1307

State of Washington 60th Legislature 2007 Regular Session

By Representatives Upthegrove, Lantz, Williams, O'Brien, Sells, McCoy, Appleton, Darneille, Lovick, Dunshee, Takko, Pedersen, Simpson, Dickerson, Moeller, McIntire, Schual-Berke, Quall, Springer and Morrell

Read first time 01/16/2007. Referred to Committee on Judiciary.

1 AN ACT Relating to freedom of student press and speech; adding a
2 new section to chapter 28A.600 RCW; adding a new section to chapter
3 28B.10 RCW; and creating a new section.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that freedom of
6 expression and freedom of the press are fundamental principles in our
7 democratic society granted to every citizen of this state and the
8 nation by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution and by
9 Article 1, section 5 of the state Constitution. These freedoms provide
10 all citizens, including students, with the right to engage in robust
11 and uninhibited discussion of issues. The legislature finds that court
12 decisions have not provided adequate protection for the free speech and
13 free press rights of students. The legislature intends to ensure free
14 speech and free press protections for both high school and college
15 students in the state in order to encourage students to become
16 educated, informed, and responsible members of society.

17 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.600
18 RCW to read as follows:

1 (1) Except as provided in subsection (3) of this section, public
2 high school students have the right to exercise freedom of speech and
3 of the press in school-sponsored media, whether or not the media are
4 supported financially by the school or by use of school facilities, or
5 are produced in conjunction with a class.

6 (2) Student editors of school-sponsored media are responsible for
7 determining the news, opinion, feature content, and advertising content
8 of the media subject to the limitations of subsection (3) of this
9 section. This subsection does not prevent a student media adviser from
10 teaching professional standards of English and journalism to the
11 student journalists. A student media adviser may not be terminated,
12 transferred, removed, or otherwise disciplined for refusing to suppress
13 the protected free expression rights of student journalists.

14 (3) Nothing in this section may be interpreted to authorize
15 expression by students that:

16 (a) Is obscene as to minors;

17 (b) Is libelous or slanderous as defined by state law;

18 (c) Constitutes an unwarranted invasion of privacy as defined by
19 state law; or

20 (d) So incites students as to create a clear and present danger of:

21 (i) The commission of unlawful acts on school premises;

22 (ii) The violation of lawful school regulations; or

23 (iii) The material and substantial disruption of the orderly
24 operation of the school. A school official must base a forecast of
25 material and substantial disruption on specific facts, including past
26 experience in the school and current events influencing student
27 behavior, and not on undifferentiated fear or apprehension.

28 (4) Any student, individually or through his or her parent or
29 guardian, enrolled in a public high school may commence a civil action
30 to obtain appropriate injunctive and declaratory relief as determined
31 by a court for a violation of subsection (1) of this section. Upon a
32 motion, a court may award attorneys' fees to a prevailing plaintiff in
33 a civil action brought under this section.

34 (5) Expression made by students in school-sponsored media is not
35 the expression of school policy. Neither a school official nor the
36 governing board of the school or school district may be held
37 responsible in any civil or criminal action for any expression made or

1 published by students in school-sponsored media unless school officials
2 or the governing board have interfered with or altered the content of
3 the student expression.

4 (6) Each school district that includes a high school shall adopt
5 regulations in the form of a written student freedom of expression
6 policy in accordance with this section. The policy shall include
7 reasonable provisions for the time, place, and manner of student
8 expression.

9 (7) For the purposes of this section:

10 (a) "Obscene as to minors" means material that the average person,
11 applying community standards, finds as a whole appeals to a minor's
12 prurient interest in sex, and that depicts or describes in an offensive
13 way sexual conduct or sexual acts, and that lacks serious literary,
14 artistic, political, or scientific value.

15 (b) "School-sponsored media" means any matter that is prepared,
16 substantially written, published, or broadcast by students, that is
17 distributed or generally made available, either free-of-charge or for
18 a fee, to members of the student body, and that is prepared under the
19 direction of a student media adviser. "School-sponsored media" does
20 not include media that is intended for distribution or transmission
21 solely in the classrooms in which they are produced.

22 (c) "Student journalist" means a student who gathers, compiles,
23 writes, edits, photographs, records, or prepares information for
24 dissemination in school-sponsored media.

25 (d) "Student media adviser" means a person who is employed,
26 appointed, or designated by the school to supervise, or provide
27 instruction relating to, school-sponsored media.

28 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.10 RCW
29 to read as follows:

30 (1) All school-sponsored media produced primarily by students at a
31 public institution of higher education are public forums for expression
32 by the student journalists and editors at the particular institution.
33 Student media, whether school-sponsored or nonschool-sponsored, are not
34 subject to prior review by school administrators.

35 (2) Student editors of school-sponsored media are responsible for
36 determining the news, opinion, feature content, and advertising content
37 of the media. This subsection (2) does not prevent a student media

1 adviser from teaching professional standards of English and journalism
2 to the student journalists. A student media adviser may not be
3 terminated, transferred, removed, or otherwise disciplined for refusing
4 to suppress the protected free expression rights of student
5 journalists.

6 (3) Any student enrolled in a public institution of higher
7 education may commence a civil action to obtain appropriate injunctive
8 and declaratory relief as determined by a court for a violation of
9 subsection (1) of this section by the public institution of higher
10 education. Upon a motion, a court may award attorneys' fees to a
11 prevailing plaintiff in a civil action brought under this section.

12 (4) Expression made by students in school-sponsored media is not
13 the expression of school policy. Neither a school official nor the
14 governing board of any public institution of higher education may be
15 held responsible in any civil or criminal action for any expression
16 made or published by students in school-sponsored media unless school
17 officials or the governing board have interfered with or altered the
18 content of the student expression.

19 (5) For the purposes of this section:

20 (a) "School-sponsored media" means any matter that is prepared,
21 substantially written, published, or broadcast by students, that is
22 distributed or generally made available, either free of charge or for
23 a fee, to members of the student body, and that is prepared under the
24 direction of a student media adviser. "School-sponsored media" does
25 not include media that is intended for distribution or transmission
26 solely in the classrooms in which they are produced.

27 (b) "Student journalist" means a student who gathers, compiles,
28 writes, edits, photographs, records, or prepares information for
29 dissemination in school-sponsored media.

30 (c) "Student media adviser" means a person who is employed,
31 appointed, or designated by the school to supervise, or provide
32 instruction relating to, school-sponsored media.

33 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** If any provision of this act or its
34 application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the
35 remainder of the act or the application of the provision to other

1 persons or circumstances is not affected.

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