



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Official Statement Condemning the Erosion of Free Speech

The assassination of Charlie Kirk on September 10th was a horrific act of violence. **Louisiana Citizens Against Censorship condemns all violence, especially violence that seeks to silence the voices and perspectives of those we do not agree with.** While many may have disagreed with Charlie Kirk, he, like every American, had the right to share his views peacefully and without the threat of violence.

In the wake of this tragedy, we have seen a disturbing increase in calls for censorship from figures who should be staunch defenders of the First Amendment.

The Hypocrisy of Power

US Representative Clay Higgins vowed to use his "Congressional authority" and "every influence with big tech platforms" to "mandate immediate ban for life of every post or commenter that belittled the assassination." He further declared his intention to go after the "business licenses and permitting" of these individuals and "cancel with extreme prejudice these evil, sick animals." Representative Higgins's proposed actions are a clear violation of the very constitutional principles he is sworn to uphold. The government is not permitted to restrict citizens' speech or penalize them for holding different points of view, no matter how repugnant that speech may be.

This alarming trend is mirrored by Attorney General Liz Murrill. In a public statement addressing a New Orleans Fire Department (NOFD) employee's post, Murrill said, "I expect consequences for this individual's grossly inappropriate comment." This call for punitive action against a private citizen's speech, however vile, stands in stark contradiction to her own later post, "we will not be silenced." Such hypocrisy suggests that "free speech" is only a value when it is used by people with whom she agrees. It weaponizes an individual's employer as a means to punish speech that is not illegal, a practice that directly undermines the principles of free expression.

Similarly, St. Tammany Parish Councilman David Cougle has contributed to this climate. He has long advocated for censorship at the parish library, calling for restrictions on books on topics he disagrees with, specifically targeting LGBTQ+ literature. Now, he celebrates people being fired for their free speech in these current events, all while he himself has publicly stated that "The only way to have a civil society is for people to be able to disagree with words" and "Free speech means things you disagree with." We wish he would take his own

statements into consideration when he continues to ask for censorship of books. Cougle's actions are a clear contradiction: he supports free speech only when it aligns with his own views.

Private Organizations' Role in a Dangerous Trend

This erosion of free speech is not limited to government officials. We have seen a number of local companies and organizations, including Southern University, Acadian Ambulance Service, and the New Orleans Fire Department (NOFD), either fire employees or start disciplinary action after they made statements.

We want to be absolutely clear: we do not condone or agree with the hateful and violent statements made by the individuals in these cases. We condemn all violence and all speech that promotes it. However, while the actions of these private companies are not prohibited by our Constitution, they are concerning restrictions on what employees are able to say as private citizens, outside of work and when not representing their employer. We must be vigilant in ensuring that the condemnation of vile speech is not used as a justification for the erosion of free expression for all.

A Pattern of Suppression

These latest developments are not isolated incidents; they are simply another step toward the full erosion of the First Amendment. For years, we have seen a continuous effort to water down free speech rights in Louisiana. We've seen the threatened funding of public libraries, calls for books to be removed in multiple parishes, and books with LGBTQIA+ and POC characters restricted behind circulation desks. We've seen library boards dismantled and filled with members supportive of more restrictions, and we've seen academics removed from research projects for sharing data about pollutants.

The current calls for censorship are simply an escalation of this ongoing trend. We must continue to let our voices be heard and push back against censorship in all its forms. Our society can only remain civil and free if we resolve our differences with words and competing ideas, not through violence or the suppression of speech we find offensive.

Louisiana Citizens Against Censorship is an all-volunteer, grassroots 501c4 organization dedicated to fighting attempts to ban or restrict books based on subjective standards of inappropriate content. We believe that informed citizens are good citizens, and access to information is the cornerstone of a functioning democracy. To that end, we oppose any legislation aimed at restricting citizens' First Amendment Rights, as well as the right to read freely. To donate visit LA-CAC.org and click the donate button.