

PRESS RELEASE

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Young Americans for Liberty at Boise State Pushes Forward in Fight for Free Speech on Campus, Demands Change of Policy

Young Americans for Liberty (YAL) at Boise State University (BSU) has made clear that it will continue pushing forward in the fight for free speech on campus. While BSU has rescinded the "security fee" it charged the student group to host a gun rights event in May, YAL National and the BSU chapter are united in their belief that this is insufficient, and a broader policy change is required.

In May of 2014, the BSU Chapter of YAL planned an event hosting Dick Heller, the named Plaintiff in the well-known Supreme Court gun rights case *District of Columbia v. Heller*. Less than 24 hours before the event, the University informed the student group that it would be required to pay a \$465 "security fee" or otherwise have the event cancelled. In the face of protests from across the political spectrum and demand letters from the Idaho Freedom Foundation, American Civil Liberties Union, and Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, the school has since rescinded the security fee.

While the rescinding of the fee is a step forward, YAL believes that this is only a partial solution. The organization now seeks to address the much larger problem of public universities across the country stifling unpopular speech.

"We are happy that Boise State University decided to refund the 'security' fee but feel that is only half the problem," Boise State YAL Chapter President Nick Ferronato said. "Unfortunately the policies that allow the school to take such actions are the real problem, and we want to work with them to ensure these policies are changed so that this doesn't happen again -- to us or any other student organization."

Boise State YAL Chapter Vice-President Sherlyn Rose is in agreement with Ferronato.

"Public universities cannot abridge free speech," Rose said. "I'm hoping our approach will send a message to others that free speech rights are non-negotiable regardless of ideology."

Leading the legal coalition on the YAL chapter's behalf is Geoffrey D. Talmon, Director of the Idaho Freedom Foundation's Center for Defense of Liberty.

"Failure to protect free speech on campus not only damages the groups and ideas that are silenced, but also deprives all students of the opportunity to have their ideas and beliefs challenged and to learn how to respond to such challenges through open and peaceful discourse," Talmon wrote in his June 30 demand letter to BSU President Robert W. Kustra. "Silencing speech devalues the education being provided to BSU's students, reduces the value of the University to the community at large, and undermines the educational mission of the University."

YAL Executive Director Jeff Frazee has thrown the full support of the national organization behind the efforts its BSU chapter.

"Nick and the rest of our chapter at Boise State University are correct to continue pressing the issue, even after the school has rescinded the fee," Frazee said. "While I am glad that a broad coalition pressured the school into taking the proper action in this particular case, this is not enough. Public universities must not be allowed to stifle unpopular speech on campus by appealing to interests such as 'security.'"

Young Americans for Liberty is the largest, most active, and fastest growing libertarian and conservative organization on America's college campuses, with a network of more than 510 chapters nationwide. YAL seeks to identify, educate, train, and mobilize students on the ideals of individual liberty and the U.S. Constitution. Learn more at www.YALiberty.org.

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