

# State of Vermont House of Representatives



Montpelier, Vermont

## Joint House Resolution

J.R.H. 9

Joint resolution supporting the sentiments expressed in “Free Inquiry on Campus: A Statement of Principles by over One Hundred Middlebury College Professors”

Offered by: Representatives Scheuermann of Stowe and Turner of Milton

Whereas, according to the document “Free Inquiry on Campus: A Statement of Principles by over One Hundred Middlebury College Professors” (the statement), on March 2, 2017, roughly 100 Middlebury College students prevented Dr. Charles Murray, a controversial visiting speaker, from addressing an audience when “unidentified assailants mobbed the speaker, and one of our faculty was seriously injured,” and

Whereas, this severe violation of academic freedom prompted a diverse group of over 100 Middlebury College faculty members to issue the statement espousing these principles on academic discourse in a civil society:

Genuine higher learning is possible only where free, reasoned, and civil speech and discussion are respected.

Only through the contest of clashing viewpoints do we have any hope of replacing mere opinion with knowledge.

The incivility and coarseness that characterize so much of American politics and culture cannot justify a response of incivility and coarseness on the college campus.

The impossibility of attaining a perfectly egalitarian sphere of free discourse can never justify efforts to silence speech and debate.

Exposure to controversial points of view does not constitute violence.

Students have the right to challenge and to protest non-disruptively the views of their professors and guest speakers.

A protest that prevents campus speakers from communicating with their audience is a coercive act.

No group of professors or students has the right to act as final arbiter of the opinions that students may entertain.

No group of professors or students has the right to determine for the entire community that a question is closed for discussion.

The purpose of college is not to make faculty or students comfortable in their opinions and prejudices.

The purpose of education is not the promotion of any particular political or social agenda.

The primary purpose of higher education is the cultivation of the mind, thus allowing for intelligence to do the hard work of assimilating and sorting information and drawing rational conclusions.

A good education produces modesty with respect to our own intellectual powers and opinions as well as openness to considering contrary views.

All our students possess the strength, in head and in heart, to consider and evaluate challenging opinions from every quarter.

We are steadfast in our purpose to provide all current and future students an education on this model, and we encourage our colleagues at colleges across the country to do the same, and

Whereas, these principles constitute the essential and fundamental values of academic freedom in a democracy, now therefore be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly supports the sentiments expressed in “Free Inquiry on Campus: A Statement of Principles by over One Hundred Middlebury College Professors,” and be it further

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to Middlebury College President Laurie L. Patton.