



## Foundation for Individual Rights in Education

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September 27, 2006

President Robert A. Wild, S.J.  
Marquette University  
O'Hara Hall, 101/102  
P.O. Box 1881  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53201-1881

*Sent via U.S. Mail and Facsimile (414-288-3161)*

Dear President Wild:

As you can see from our directors and board of advisors, FIRE unites civil rights and civil liberties leaders, scholars, journalists, and public intellectuals across the political and ideological spectrum on behalf of liberty, due process, legal equality, voluntary association, and, in this case, freedom of speech and academic freedom on America's college campuses. Our website, [www.thefire.org](http://www.thefire.org), will give you a greater sense of our identity and of our activities.

FIRE is concerned about the threat to free speech posed by Marquette University's removal of a flier bearing a political quotation from a philosophy doctoral student's office door. Censorship of political expression of this sort represents viewpoint discrimination and undermines the commitment to academic freedom that is so central to the goals of Marquette University, and to the philosophy department in particular.

This is our understanding of the facts. Please inform us if you believe we are in error. On August 29, 2006, Ph.D. student Stuart Ditsler hung a flier with a quotation by writer and humorist Dave Barry on his office door. The quotation read, "As Americans we must always remember that we all have a common enemy, an enemy that is dangerous, powerful, and relentless. I refer, of course, to the federal government." Ditsler reports that other professors and graduate students in his corridor have posted materials on their office doors in the past, such as a cartoon critical of the Bush administration and an article criticizing "family values" voters in the 2004 presidential election, to name a few. On September 5, Philosophy Department Chair James South sent Ditsler an e-mail that read,

I had several complaints today about a quotation that was on the door of CH 132F. I've taken the quotation down. While I am a strong supporter of academic freedom, I'm afraid that hallways and



We are aware that Marquette takes very seriously its values as a Jesuit institution. We also believe that it takes seriously its role as an educational institution and as a leader in academic excellence. These mandates need not and should not be at odds. We ask that you reconsider the decision to remove the Dave Barry quote from Stuart Ditsler's office door, and that you clarify Marquette's position on free expression and academic freedom. We request a response by October 11, 2006.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Tara E. Sweeney  
Senior Program Officer

cc:

Madeline Wake, Provost, Marquette University  
Arthur Scheuber, Vice President, Marquette University  
Thomas Peters, Associate Vice President, Marquette University  
Greg Kliebhan, Senior Vice President, Marquette University  
James South, Philosophy Department Chair, Marquette University  
Stuart Ditsler