



## STIFLING SPEECH

### F.I.R.E.

July 9, 2007 -- THE island nation of Singapore has a reputation for zealously regulating the daily life of its citizens. It has banned chewing gum and levies stiff fines for failure to flush public toilets.

And when it comes to free speech, Singaporeans must use a heavily restricted "Speakers' Corner" and limit their discourse to uncontroversial topics - and only then after registering with the local police station.

Pretty un-American, right? Not so fast. Shockingly, *public universities* across this country are taking their cues on regulating student speech from Singapore's repressive civic culture.

For example, speech at McNeese State in Louisiana is governed by the school's "Public Forum Regulations Policy," which limits student speech to two "Public Demonstration Zones." In these two "zones" - and *only* in these zones - McNeese students "may speak on campus one time per week" for just two hours.

Student groups have it worse: instead of once a week, they can only demonstrate once per semester. What's more, all students seeking to use the zones must submit an "application," to be approved "at least 72 hours in advance." Finally, McNeese limits student speech in the zones to Monday through Friday, dawn to dusk. Sound familiar?

Many public universities maintain tiny, remote "free-speech zones" on campus - despite their blatant unconstitutionality. Onerous speech zones have been reported at Clemson University in South Carolina, Western Illinois University, Florida State University, University of Nebraska at Omaha, University of North Carolina-Greensboro, University of Oregon, California State University at Chico, West Virginia University, University of Nevada at Reno, Citrus College in California and the University of Northern Texas, as well as many other campuses.

Free-speech zones at public universities are an embarrassment. After all, this is the United States - *not* Singapore.

*Written by the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (thefire.org).*



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