

# The rising cost of intuition

College speech codes leave to the imagination what's 'acceptable' speech

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Administrators at the University of Louisville should be cardinal red with embarrassment.

The school's speech code has been held up by a free speech organization as a shining example of what not to do in regulating speech on college campuses.

"The University of Louisville maintains such a repressive speech code, it's hard to know where to begin," says a statement from the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, which recently awarded Louisville its sardonic "Speech Code of the Month."

The university, in its own words, "requires that public speech and discourse on campus shall be civil."

That's certainly an admirable goal, one which we agree with wholeheartedly. Yet, we sincerely doubt the sweeping First Amendment leaves room for the government, or by extension a public university, to regulate the "civility" of anyone's speech.

What is civil and what is not? And who gets to decide?

"There is just no way such a requirement could possibly be constitutional," FIRE says.

Folks at an institution of higher learning should be among the first to realize the government, under the First Amendment, is powerless to regulate the "civility" of speech.

It's absurd, really, that college administrators today are so intoxicated with political correctness that they can no longer see and comprehend the First Amendment.

It's also a crime that such blatant violations of free speech are allowed to exist on campuses across the country, requiring organizations such as FIRE to pluck them one by one.

Louisville's speech code also defines a harasser as one who "makes an offensively coarse utterance, gesture, or display, or addresses abusive language to any person present."

Hmm. So, students are presumably to know -- how, by intuition? -- which utterances, gestures and displays are "offensively coarse."

And, if the unabridged recent history of political correctness is any guide, it will be up to anyone within earshot to determine if any particular language at the University of Louisville is "abusive."

It's not just that Louisville has Thought Police on campus.

The university also seems to have deputized everyone.

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