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# Institutional Neutrality

At Washington State University, we are committed to fostering an environment where diverse ideas and perspectives can flourish. As such, the university will maintain a practice of neutrality and will not take a position on contentious political or social issues, except in rare circumstances.

This practice is guided by three core principles:

- 1. Promoting Open Debate:** Washington State University was founded as a place where competing ideas can and should be debated vigorously. We believe that universities serve as a crucible for intellectual exchange, where differing viewpoints can be explored and challenged.
- 2. Ensuring Fair and Respectful Discourse:** We have a responsibility to ensure that debates within our community are fair, open, civil, and respectful. By not aligning the institution with specific political or social positions, we create a space where all voices can be heard and considered without fear of institutional bias.

On occasion, speech can cross the line and be threatening, discriminatory, or disruptive. Not all offensive speech, however, is actionable. To report public comments that may violate our community conduct standards, contact local campus security, campus police, or the [Center for Community Standards](#).

Concerns about [hate speech or discriminatory harassment](#) can be reported to [Compliance and Civil Rights](#) via the [online reporting form](#).

To learn more, visit the [Freedom of Speech at WSU](#) website.

- 3. Avoiding the Stifling of Discussion:** Taking an institutional stance on controversial issues risks shutting down debate and limiting the free exchange of ideas. Our role as a university is to foster discussion, not stifle it. We believe that it is through robust dialogue that our community can grow and learn.

*[The] danger...to speech from the chilling of individual thought and expression...is especially real in the University setting... For the University...to cast disapproval on particular viewpoints of its students risks the suppression of free speech and creative inquiry in one of the vital centers for the Nation's intellectual life, its colleges and university campuses.*

—U.S. Supreme Court, *Rosenberger v. Rector & Visitors of the University of Virginia*, (1995)

## Exceptions to this position:

There may be rare occasions when an issue directly impacts the broad university community or the functioning of the institution. In such cases, we may take a position to protect the interests and well-being of our community members or the operational integrity of the university.

We encourage all members of the Washington State University community—students, faculty, and staff—to engage thoughtfully and respectfully in discussions on important issues. By upholding these principles, we strive to create an inclusive and dynamic

environment where the pursuit of knowledge and understanding is paramount.

Thank you for your continued dedication to our community's intellectual and ethical standards.