

**Testimony before the
Pennsylvania House of Representatives
Select Committee on Student Academic Freedom
Jessica Sabol, college student and member of
Pennsylvania State Education Association
Testifying on behalf of the
Pennsylvania State Education Association Student Program
June 1, 2006**

Good morning. I also want to take this opportunity to thank Chairmen Stevenson and Curry and the other members of the committee for the opportunity to speak this morning. My name is Jessica Sabol and I have been a student at Bloomsburg University for the last four years and will be receiving a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education and a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science. I am a student member of the Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA), which represents approximately 10,000 education majors at colleges and universities throughout Pennsylvania. I am here to outline concerns with House Resolution 177.

In my four years at Bloomsburg University, I experienced an atmosphere where different opinions and political beliefs were welcomed and encouraged. Professors instilled in us the importance of considering the opinions of others and thinking critically about important issues facing us today and in the future, rather than making decisions based on what we know and believe. While it was not always comfortable hearing others' points of view, it did broaden our awareness of issues and expanded our knowledge about those issues.

Because varying opinions and political beliefs were tolerated and encouraged, we did not experience problems with professors discriminating against students because of such political beliefs or expressions. However, if such a problem would occur, the university has an internal complaint procedure called the "Academic Grievance Procedure" which students can

utilize. A copy is included in the packet of materials we have provided for you. This procedure and accompanying form are available to be downloaded from the university's web site. Students are informed of this procedure during student orientation. While I never had to use the procedure, I do know that it provides a mechanism for students who believe that they have been discriminated against for their beliefs to challenge the actions of the professor. This procedure ultimately requires the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at the university handle the complaint, if it cannot be settled at lower levels. This type of internal system is a much more appropriate method of handling problems. It is not necessary for the government to legislate procedures to handle such problems when our public colleges and universities have already established a grievance process.

I tremendously enjoyed my years at Bloomsburg University and believe that I received an education that has provided me with the skills and knowledge to be successful and continue learning throughout my life and career. Thank you and I look forward to answering your questions.

