

STATE OF MICHIGAN LAW DAY 2007 ESSAY CONTEST
“LIBERTY UNDER LAW: EMPOWERING YOUTH, ASSURING DEMOCRACY”
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Suppose that some students want to show support for a political candidate by wearing campaign pins to school. Should a school be allowed to have a policy against wearing items that show support for political candidates?

Election of the new president is around the corner. All around the streets people are talking about who they believe should be the next president. Kids in school discuss their opinions and show support for their choice of president with buttons. I believe that a school should not be allowed to have a policy against wearing items that show support of political candidates.

My belief is represented through the Core Democratic Value of liberty. Liberty bestows upon you the freedom to believe what you want, freedom to have your own ideas and opinions, and to express your ideas in public. Students and faculty have the liberty to show who they believe is the finest political candidate. They have the right to express their own opinions and believe what they want about the political candidates running for office.

In the history of our country, the Bill of Rights was created to present to us our basic rights. The First Amendment states, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.” The policy would be denying students the right of freedom of speech which is expressed in the First Amendment. The First Amendment also states that the Congress cannot make any law reducing the freedom of speech. Therefore, a school should not have the right to reduce the students' freedom of speech concerning their support of a political candidate. If a student has a desire to express their support of a political candidate through wearing items, the freedom of speech gives them that right.

A similar situation was presented upon the Supreme Court in Tinker v. Des Moines Independent School District, 393 U.S. 503(1969). This case was concerning three students in Des Moines, Iowa who were suspended from school because they wore black armbands to protest a government policy in Vietnam. According to the case, a prohibition against expression of opinion, without any evidence that the rule is necessary to avoid substantial interference with school discipline or the rights of others, is not permissible under the First and Fourteenth Amendments. This means that the students were granted the freedom to wear the black armbands in a form of protesting, through the First and Fourteenth Amendments. Provided the freedom of speech as U.S. citizens, the students had the right to express their opinion about the issue in Vietnam. Furthermore, the students weren't creating a disturbance within their school. The same thing goes for wearing campaign items. Students have the right to express themselves as long as they are not hurting anybody.

In conclusion, I strongly believe that a school should not be allowed to have a policy against wearing items that show support for a political candidate. Such a policy would be going against what the United States is built upon, freedom.