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## *Ideology Is the Issue on Campus, not Equality*

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by **Michael P. Tremoglie**

In September 2002, Washington University School of Law's, Student Bar Association (SBA), voted against recognizing the Law Students Pro-Life organization (LSPL). In a September 9, 2002 letter of rejection to LSPL, the SBA said the problem with the group was "the narrowness of your group's interests and goals." The SBA "felt that the organization was not touching on all possible Pro Life issues, " because it did not have an anti-death penalty" position in its constitution.

Enter The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), a nonprofit educational foundation, located in Philadelphia, devoted to free speech, individual liberty, religious freedom, and the rights of conscience, legal equality, due process, and academic freedom on our nation's campuses. Formed by University of Pennsylvania professor Alan Kors, of the infamous Penn "water buffalo " incident, and Massachusetts ACLU lawyer Harvey Silverglate, this organization is an advocate for students and student organizations experiencing discrimination.

SBA twice denied LSPL recognition as an official campus organization. The second rejection was delivered to LSPL on September 23 without comment. Shortly after that second decision, LSPL was informed that the administration would not overrule the SBA or take any corrective action. FIRE's Executive Director, Thor Halvorssen, wrote Washington University's Chancellor Mark Wrighton, September 30, stating that. "a bigoted intolerance toward religious students" who advocate "pro-life principles as applied to abortion, euthanasia, and assisted suicide." Halvorssen stated that the SBA is making a specious claim that those

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who do not oppose the death penalty cannot be anti-abortion because theologians distinguish between the protection of innocent life and murderers.

When the University neither replied to FIRE nor acted to correct their ruling FIRE advised LSPL and organized a campaign to restore the students to their rights. FIRE pointed out that the SBA had rightly recognized other organizations whose missions some might find "narrow," demonstrating an abusive double standard. FIRE also reminded Washington University of its own published statement that it was "committed to the principles of freedom of religion and speech."

FIRE also issued an open letter to the American Civil Liberties Union of Eastern Missouri to the SBA, asking them to "reaffirm their commitment to tolerance, openness, and pluralism." Law School Dean Joel Seligman, received numerous calls from national media and hundreds of emails. He subsequently instructed the SBA to hold an extraordinary session to discuss the recognition of LSPL. A majority of the SBA members who spoke at this meeting voiced objections to the recognition of LSPL. The meeting was adjourned and a follow-up meeting set for Monday, October 14, 2002.

FIRE immediately began circulating a national petition on behalf of Washington University LSPL. In just 48 hours, more than 200 professors, law students, undergraduates, and private citizens from around the country signed the petition, which called on the SBA and the administration to preserve "freedom of conscience, freedom of association, and freedom of speech" by recognizing LSPL. "A great university," the petition urged, "does not impose a dreary uniformity of beliefs."

The SBA reversed their ruling at the October 14 meeting and authorized the LSPL.

"This should serve as a reminder to all administrators who are concerned with preserving intellectual diversity at their institution," said Kors. "If they present their campuses as centers of individual rights and legal equality, they must not dictate the political and moral views of their students and student organizations."  
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Yet according to an article in Human Life Review American colleges are hostile for the pro-life activist. Pro-lifer students are harassed by other students, and by faculty and administrators.

The article quotes Roger Severino, former President of the Harvard Law School Society for Law, Life and Religion, as saying that he and members of his group would have, "Our posters ...routinely and almost exclusively be torn down." And they would be, " called almost every name in the book, from 'morons', to 'homophobe,' 'religious zealot,' 'bigot,' and 'oppressors of women.'"

Even students at Catholic institutions experience this discrimination according to Human Life. One Boston College student notes that "many faculty members seem scared to say anything against [abortion]. . . ."

We have a hard time finding faculty advisors; everyone says that they are too busy to help us out."

The fact is that as both FIRE and Human Life Review have chronicled, colleges are not the venue for a critical examination of issues - especially about abortion. Feminazism and other similar liberal dogma are rampant on campus. Colleges do not want today's student know everything only certain things.

[Michael P. Tremoglie](#)

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