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## College free speech shouldn't be muzzled

COLLEGE campuses are supposed to be places that would make Thomas Jefferson and James Madison proud. However, the free exchange of ideas has suffered both from the stranglehold of political correctness and a spiral of silence stifling expression of student views held in opposition to those of their professors.

No one ever predicted democracy would be easy, not even Madison or Jefferson. And today, no one can dispute that freedom of speech on college campuses is in danger of petering out. Put into that larger context, a bill proposed by state Sen. Bill Morrow goes in the wrong direction by severely restricting California public university professors' free speech in the classroom in order to protect the ideas of students.

That's like fixing the problem of hate speech by outlawing all public expression. Here, the old saying of two wrongs not making a right comes to mind.

The Oceanside Republican's bill would gag all professors in the California public university system (23 CSU campuses and 10 UC campuses) in order to curb their unfair influence over naive students, at least that's how Morrow sees it. SB5, which heads to the Senate education committee on April 20, reads: "Teachers should not take unfair advantage of a student's immaturity by indoctrinating him or her with the teacher's own opinions ..."

Again, how absurd is a law that prevents college professors from giving their opinions? We need fewer laws abridging free speech in the classroom or in the boardroom, at least that's what Jefferson and Madison would say.

Also, Morrow's bill can't back up the claim that a student's "immaturity" is somehow a factor. How does one measure that? Bad language makes for bad law. The legislation's generalizations and vague prohibitions on speech should kill this quicker than a poll tax in the South.

The problems of overbearing professors who stifle other views but their own in the classroom is real, but we believe, isolated. These should be dealt with by each university administration and

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department head, who have a responsibility to ensure the free exchange of ideas in a nonthreatening learning atmosphere. California universities should hire professors of varying political philosophies so that "the values of pluralism, diversity, opportunity, critical intelligence, openness, and fairness' are reflected inside the halls of the state's universities.

Finally, freedom of speech should not be muzzled but encouraged by professors as well as by students. Too often it takes the efforts of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) to challenge university political correctness and to bring back the free exchange of ideas missing from some college campuses. A student should not fear retaliation by a professor for expressing opposing views. In fact, he or she should be rewarded for contributing to the class or to the university as a whole.

Morrow's right in accentuating a need for a student bill of rights. But he's dead wrong in trying to legislate it by prohibiting the exercise of one's right to expression whether that belongs to the student or the professor.

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