

By Senator Davis

5-00963-26

20261478

A bill to be entitled

An act relating to intellectual freedom and viewpoint diversity; amending s. 1001.03, F.S.; deleting a definition of the term "shield"; requiring the State Board of Education to ensure that Florida College System institutions are free from political influence and interference; deleting a requirement that the state board not shield Florida College System institution students, faculty, or staff from protected speech; amending s. 1001.706, F.S.; deleting a definition of the term "shield"; requiring the Board of Governors of the State University System to ensure that state universities are free from political influence and interference; deleting a requirement that the board not shield state university students, faculty, or staff from protected speech; creating s. 1004.022, F.S.; granting specified rights to students of Florida College System institutions and state universities; granting specified rights to faculty; amending s. 1004.421, F.S.; conforming a cross-reference; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. Paragraphs (a) and (c) of subsection (19) of section 1001.03, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

1001.03 Specific powers of State Board of Education.—

(19) INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM AND VIEWPOINT DIVERSITY

ASSESSMENT.—

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(a) For the purposes of this subsection, the term:

1. "Intellectual freedom and viewpoint diversity" means the exposure of students, faculty, and staff to, and the encouragement of their exploration of, a variety of ideological and political perspectives.

2. "Shield" means to limit students', faculty members', or staff members' access to, or observation of, ideas and opinions that they may find uncomfortable, unwelcome, disagreeable, or offensive.

(c) The State Board of Education shall ensure that ~~may not shield students, faculty, or staff at Florida College System institutions~~ are free from undue political influence and interference in academic affairs, including curriculum design, faculty appointments, research activities, and administrative operations ~~free speech protected under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, Art. I of the State Constitution, or s. 1004.097.~~

Section 2. Paragraphs (a) and (c) of subsection (13) of section 1001.706, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

1001.706 Powers and duties of the Board of Governors.—

(13) INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM AND VIEWPOINT DIVERSITY ASSESSMENT.—

(a) For the purposes of this subsection, the term:

1. "Intellectual freedom and viewpoint diversity" means the exposure of students, faculty, and staff to, and the encouragement of their exploration of, a variety of ideological and political perspectives.

2. "Shield" means to limit students', faculty members', or staff members' access to, or observation of, ideas and opinions

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59 ~~that they may find uncomfortable, unwelcome, disagreeable, or~~
60 ~~offensive.~~

61 (c) The Board of Governors shall ensure that ~~may not shield~~
62 ~~students, faculty, or staff at state universities~~ are free from
63 undue political influence and interference in academic affairs,
64 including curriculum design, faculty appointments, research
65 activities, and administrative operations ~~free speech protected~~
66 ~~under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution,~~
67 ~~Art. I of the State Constitution, or s. 1004.97.~~

68 Section 3. Section 1004.022, Florida Statutes, is created
69 to read:

70 1004.022 Academic freedom.—Notwithstanding any other law to
71 the contrary:

72 (1) Every student in the State University System and
73 Florida College System has the unalienable right to pursue
74 education access across all academic disciplines without
75 governmental or institutional interference, including, but not
76 limited to, a student's prerogative to select, drop, or change
77 courses and areas of study without facing pressure or
78 restrictions based on political or ideological grounds.

79 (2) Faculty members in the State University System and
80 Florida College System are entitled to full academic freedom in
81 their teaching, research, scholarship, and creative activity.
82 This includes the right to do all of the following:

83 (a) Investigate, discover, create, and disseminate
84 knowledge without undue interference or restriction from
85 political, ideological, or institutional forces.

86 (b) Determine the content of their courses, methods of
87 instruction, and subject matter consistent with professional

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88 standards and the mission of the institution.

89 (c) Engage in extramural speech and professional discourse
90 without institutional discipline or reprisal, provided such
91 expression is consistent with their responsibilities as scholars
92 and educators. Academic freedom for faculty shall be exercised
93 in a manner consistent with the standards of the academic
94 profession, institutional policies of shared governance, and the
95 principles articulated by the American Association of University
96 Professors.

97 Section 4. Subsection (7) of section 1004.421, Florida
98 Statutes, is amended to read:

99 1004.421 Election Law Center at the Florida State
100 University.—The Florida State University Election Law Center is
101 hereby created at the Florida State University College of Law.

102 (7) The center's research, work, activities, filings,
103 speakers, events, and operations shall be subject to academic
104 freedom protections. The center or any of its full-time faculty
105 or staff may not be compelled to conduct, consult on, or
106 otherwise assist any research or initiatives by any outside
107 federal, state, or local official or agency or private person or
108 entity. The center shall seek to promote intellectual freedom
109 and viewpoint diversity as defined in s. 1001.706(13)(a). ~~s.~~
110 ~~1001.706(13)(a)1.~~

111 Section 5. This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.