

Sen. Vukmir, Rep. Jarchow: Author strong proposal to protect speech at universities and tech schools

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MADISON, Wis. — Sen. Leah Vukmir, R-Brookfield, and Rep. Adam Jarchow, R-Balsam Lake, introduced a bill Wednesday that would ensure free speech protections for students and faculty at ALL public higher education institutions in Wisconsin.

“Across the country, free speech rights are under assault,” Vukmir said. “Students, professors and administrators are using intimidation tactics to silence those they disagree with. Now is not the time to treat this issue lightly; well thought-out legislative action is required. This must end.”

The proposal would explicitly outline protections for free speech in statute for students, faculty and staff on both university and technical school campuses. With legislative oversight, the UW Board of Regents and Technical College System Board would implement a strict disciplinary system for those who infringe on others’ free speech rights.

In the Joint Finance Committee agency briefings on the governor’s budget, UW System President Ray Cross testified there are circumstances where a university might not allow an invited speaker on campus because they couldn’t protect his or her safety. This bill also creates a statute to preserve a speaker’s ability to come to campus in those cases.

“It is not the role of a university administration to stifle our First Amendment right

to free speech,” Jarchow said. “Our campuses should be places of spirited and civil debate, not mob rule.”