

# Rep. Anderson: In support of campus free speech, not conservative safe spaces

Posted on Thursday, Jan 24, 2019

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Madison – In response to accusations of political bias by UW-Madison Political Science Professor Ken Mayer, Rep. Jimmy Anderson released the following statement.

“There have been times over the last couple years where our politics have felt especially strange. Individual politicians and even entire political parties have abandoned long-held beliefs in order to serve the whims of a uniquely terrible and temperamental person who happens to be president. As the great Will Ferrell once said, ‘I feel like I’m taking crazy pills!’ However, while I understand that when it comes to our national discourse, words have no meaning, I had expected more from my Republican colleagues here in Wisconsin.

It was just this last session when Speaker Robin Vos and Representative Dave Murphy introduced the Free Speech on Campus Act. My Republican colleagues argued that we needed this legislation in order ‘to protect the First Amendment on college campuses, encourage the debate of ideas and promote diversity of thought.’

Speaker Vos continued in his press release saying, ‘Free speech means free speech for everyone... We need more speech, not less, it’s time to put in appropriate measures to ensure all speech is protected at our universities.’”

“With a loud record scratch, we now jump to the start of this session and Representative Murphy is, strangely enough, using his platform as the chair of the

Colleges and Universities Committee to attack a university professor for exercising his free-speech rights. In a letter last seen drowning in a bucket of irony, Representative Murphy criticizes Professor Mayer, going so far as to say he was 'appalled by [Professor Mayer's] politically polarized characterization of the Trump presidency.'"

"For clarity, let's take a quick look at Professor Mayer's syllabus. In it, he describes the last two years as 'the most unconventional presidency in American history, with a president who gleefully flouts the norms of governing and presidential behavior...To his supporters, this is not a bug, but a feature, and they rejoice in his contempt for what they insist is a corrupt DC establishment.'"

"The syllabus continues, 'To others, he is a spectacularly unqualified and catastrophically unfit egomaniac who poses an overt threat to the Republic.' It goes on to describe several factual events that help color the last two years including Russian operatives hacking the DNC to help boost the Trump campaign, the multiple Trump campaign officials who have pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI, and the many foibles of former Trump attorney Michael Cohen, which include campaign-finance violations for paying off Trump's multiple mistresses, which was done at Trump's behest, and the dishonesty swirling around the Trump Tower Moscow project.

From my reading, Professor Mayer gave a concise snapshot of the Trump presidency from competing views and then a brief history to help explain why some have been critical of the president. Would Representative Murphy prefer an ahistorical account of the last couple years? Or can we just not criticize Dear Leader? If anything, I could easily name a dozen other events that demonstrate President Trump's professional and moral failings, so should I draft my own letter criticizing Professor Mayer for censoring the truth from his students? Of course not!

Professor Mayer ought to be allowed to teach his class how he sees fit without members of the legislature attacking him. It is unfortunate that Representative Murphy is so discomforted by Professor Mayer's exercise of his free speech rights. Whether it is driven by hypocrisy or cynicism or partisanship, it is genuinely frustrating to me.

If only someone had championed some kind of act that would guarantee free speech on campus. Maybe Speaker Vos and Representative Murphy will work with me to protect the First Amendment on college campuses, because we can all agree

that it is important to encourage the debate of ideas and promote diversity of thought.

We need more speech, not less. Free speech ought to mean free speech for everyone. I call on my colleagues to join me and put in the appropriate measures to ensure that all speech is protected at our universities. In fact, we can call our bill the Campus Free Speech Act.

Now, I will admit, I feel as if I have heard those words in the past, but I can't quite put my finger on where I heard them. Whatever, as my Republican colleagues have made very clear, a person's previous statements don't matter. Words are meaningless. Let's pass around some more of those crazy pills!"