



BORDC CAMPUS ORGANIZING HANDBOOK

How to Protect Civil Liberties on Your Campus

**Includes: Suggestions for Passing a Student Government
Resolution Declaring Your Campus a Civil Liberties Safe Zone**

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Bill of Rights Defense Committee
241 King St., Suite 216
Northampton, MA 01060
(413) 582-0110
www.bordc.org | info@bordc.org

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"They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety."
- Benjamin Franklin, 1759

Dear Student Activist,

The Bill of Rights Defense Committee (BORDC) thanks you for your interest in starting a campaign to protect civil rights and liberties on your campus. Throughout American history, student organizers have played a vital role in creating social change. The current movement to protect our civil liberties post-9/11 is no exception. We welcome you to this historic grassroots movement.

Our national office hopes you find the enclosed resources helpful to your campaign. We are always willing to assist you in your efforts – simply give us a call (413-582-0110) or send us an e-mail (info@bordc.org). We will also be happy to help you network with other student groups or communities that have passed resolutions. Remember that you are not alone in your campaign – over 300 communities and dozens of student governments, faculty and university senates, librarian associations, and academic organizations have passed resolutions opposing counterterrorism laws and policies that threaten our civil liberties. For an updated list of campus bodies that have passed resolutions, and for more information and resources, including an electronic copy of all materials in this packet, visit: www.bordc.org/Student.

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We invite you to share your suggestions or tools that you are using with us via email at info@bordc.org. Join the BORDC campus list-serve by sending an email to bordsn-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

We wish you the best of luck with your campaign,
The Bill of Rights Defense Committee

* BORDC thanks the UMASS Rights Coalition for its help in developing these materials.

"The USA Patriot Act that came out soon after the terrorist attacks was put in place to help maintain and protect national safety. However, this protection of national safety comes at a cost: A vast decrease in the civil liberties our nation is built upon."
- Tyler Paterson, University of Maryland Student

Suggestions for Passing a Student Government Resolution

Step 1: Form a Registered Student Organization (if you're not already part of one)

Student organizations have access to resources that will be invaluable to your efforts. Almost all campuses have an office devoted to student organizations that can help you start your organization and set up a campus list-serve and web-site for your resolution campaign. You can also ask them about other resources that your campus can provide (such as free butcher paper or computer printing) and how to reserve meeting spaces on your campus. The student activities office can also provide you with a list of student organizations, through which you can identify good coalition partners (see step 2), and can tell you about campus policies that may affect how you are able to campaign, such as restrictions on flyering and public advocacy.

Step 2: Identify Your Allies and Gather Support

Identify and contact student activist groups and coalitions that may be interested in organizing around the USA PATRIOT Act and civil liberties issues. Try to build a diverse coalition that includes students from many different backgrounds and interest areas. Ask to speak at different activist groups' meetings, and pass around a sign-up sheet to add interested students to your list-serve. Then hold an initial planning meeting with all your new allies. At the meeting, create a strategy that will help you accomplish your goals of educating your campus community, getting the resolution passed, and building an activist base that will support civil liberties long after the resolution is passed (see steps 3-7 for strategy ideas).

Step 3: Talk to Members of Your Student Government

In addition to getting the support of other activists, you should also seek the support of student government members. Organize a meeting with the supportive and interested members of your student government. This meeting will serve two important functions: to educate the student government about your resolution campaign and to inform your coalition about the process for getting a student government resolution passed. Your resolution is more likely to pass if the student government considers the resolution a joint effort.

Step 4: Draft a Resolution

Together with the student government members you identified in step 3, draft a resolution. You can start off with our sample student resolution and then add clauses from our student and community resolution clause libraries (www.bordc.org/student-clause-lib.htm).

Step 5: Create a Buzz

Before introducing the resolution to your student government, do additional outreach and campus education. The USA PATRIOT Act and other counter-terrorism laws and regulations are complex and often misunderstood, so it is vital for your coalition to inform your campus why it needs your resolution.

Different strategies include:

- Holding a campus-wide rally, with informational speakers and flyers.
- Holding a public forum or teach-in on the threats to civil liberties post 9-11. For talking points read Stacey Schlaw's speech and other resources available at www.bordc.org/Student-tools. You can also pass out relevant articles from the BORDC clearinghouse.
- Setting up an informational table in a prominent location on campus or canvassing the dorms.
- Writing a letter to the editor to your school paper explaining your resolution campaign. See page 8 of this booklet for sample letters.

- Performing street theatre, like Café America or reenacting Guantanamo Bay’s Camp Delta. For more information, visit www.bordc.org/Student-tools.htm#streettheatre.
- Petitioning to demonstrate campus support. Some student governments actually require a petition drive before they will pass a resolution. See page 9 for a sample petition.
- Asking supportive faculty or campus administrators to write letters in support of your resolution, make announcements in their classes, or otherwise support your efforts. You want your student government to know that there will be administrative support for implementing the resolution once it is passed. See our “Tips for Working with Faculty and Staff” on page 11 for ideas.

Step 6: Pass the Resolution

When the resolution is introduced, have as many members of your coalition attend the student government meeting as possible. If you feel it would be helpful, you can bring signs, wear buttons, and speak out during debate. It is critical for members of your student government to know that their constituents support the resolution, especially if your student government has not historically taken political stances.

Step 7: Follow Up

As you may have to play watchdog to make sure the provisions of your resolution are properly implemented, it is vital to keep your coalition connected and continuously informed. Additionally, as you probably know, new threats to our civil liberties arise all the time and keeping your network together will help your campus address them in the future. Passing a resolution is just a small step towards protecting your civil rights and liberties. Visit www.bordc.org/Outreach.htm for ideas on how to continue your work.



Photo: The Hoya October 31, 2003

A Georgetown University student protests the USA PATRIOT Act inside a mock prison made of chicken wire.

Sample Student Resolution to Defend the Bill of Rights

WHEREAS students have played a vital role in many major social movements, including the school desegregation movement, anti-war movements, and the anti-globalization movement; AND

WHEREAS in the tradition of these social movements, members of the [Student Government] believe we must take a stand against federal government counter-terrorism laws and policy, including portions of the USA PATRIOT Act, the Homeland Security Act, and related Executive Orders and Federal Regulations, that threaten academic freedom by:

- Restricting the implementation of the Freedom of Information Act, which can affect the quality of academic research
- Restricting who may conduct scientific research using certain biological materials
- Limiting visas for foreign students and scholars and using programs such as SEVIS and Special Registration (NSEERS) to increase the burden for foreign students, and particularly students from Arab and Muslim countries, to travel to and study in the United States
- Allowing surveillance of public and private communications, including infiltrating and monitoring student organizations engaged in political advocacy or religious practice
- Allowing Federal agents to collect information from academic libraries and bookstores while placing gag orders on librarians and booksellers from disclosing occurrences of providing that information; AND

WHEREAS our campus community strives to create a climate that maximizes each individual's ability to receive a quality education, which requires an institution in which diversity is embraced, valued, and celebrated; AND

WHEREAS, [x # of campus bodies – see www.bordc.org/Student] throughout the country have enacted resolutions reaffirming support for human rights and freedoms of their students in the face of government and campus policies that threaten these values;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the [Student Government] calls on the [Campus Police] to:

- Refrain from engaging in the surveillance and questioning of individuals or groups of individuals based on their participation in activities protected by the First Amendment, such as political advocacy or the practice of a religion, without particularized suspicion of criminal activity unrelated to the activity protected by the First Amendment
- Refrain from assisting in the secret or military detention or deportation of any member of our campus community
- Refrain from participating in a joint search of property or a residence with any law enforcement agency, absent the assurance that simultaneous notice of the execution of a search warrant has been given to the targeted member of our campus community
- Remind students that they are entitled to legal advice before they speak with law enforcement personnel
- Consult with the Office of the General Counsel [or similar legal office] if local, state, or federal law enforcement asks you to cooperate in an action you believe to be against campus policy or unconstitutional; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the [Student Government] requests [Campus Library] to post in a prominent place within the library a notice to library users as follows: WARNING: Under Section 215 of the federal USA PATRIOT Act (Public Law 107-56), records of the books and other materials you borrow from this library may be obtained by federal agents. That federal law prohibits librarians from informing you if federal agents have obtained records about you. Questions about this policy should be directed to: Attorney General John Ashcroft, Department of Justice, Washington, DC 20530; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the [Student Government] calls on [President or Dean] to report to members of the [Campus] community every term in a form that facilitates a public assessment of the effect of federal counter-terrorism efforts on students, faculty, and staff at [Campus]:

- a) The extent to which law enforcement agents are monitoring political meetings, religious gatherings, or other activities protected by the First Amendment on our campus
- b) The number of times education records have been obtained from [campus] under section 507 of the USA PATRIOT Act;
- c) The number of times library records have been obtained from [campus] libraries under section 215 of the USA PATRIOT Act;
- d) The number of times that records of the books purchased by bookstore patrons have been obtained under section 215 of the USA PATRIOT Act;
- e) The number of times students, faculty and staff have been unable to enter the US and/or resume their studies or teaching functions due to visa denials;
- f) The number of times faculty and student research and publications have been suppressed or otherwise restricted due to federal concern for security or political reasons; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the [Student Government] will vigorously defend the constitutionally protected rights of all students to peacefully protest and express our political and religious views within the confines of the First Amendment without fear of excessive governmental and campus administrative scrutiny; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the [Student Government] affirms that our campus is a hate-free zone and denounces all attempts to discriminate against or intimidate students based on their nationality, religion, ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, or political ideology; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the [Student Government] commits to organizing a forum addressing student privacy concerns consisting of a panel of relevant campus administrators, professors, and community members; AND

FINALLY BE IT RESOLVED that [President of Student Government] will transmit a copy of this resolution to the President of [Campus], members of the [Campus] Board of Directors [or Board of Regents], and [Head of Campus Police] accompanied by a letter urging them to ensure that counter-terrorism laws and policies be implemented in a manner that protects the civil liberties of our students, faculty, and staff.



Cornell University students and faculty recreate a Guantanamo prison.
(Ithaca Journal April, 24, 2004)

About Press Releases

Press releases are sent to media outlets to inform them of news. Many smaller newspapers, including campus papers, will often print your release word for word as an article. The others will use it as a starting point for their article research, and therefore it is critical to give them the right information.

The most important, most relevant information should be in the first paragraph of the release. This is the nuts and bolts of your story– the who, what, when, where, and why. Reporters get a lot of press releases, so if you don't catch them in the first paragraph, they won't read beyond it. Middle paragraphs should include additional background information and quotes from members of your coalition or student government. The final paragraph can include some additional background, such as how your action fits into the national movement. Press releases should generally not be longer than a page.

You may want to send out several different press releases to announce the formation of your group or coalition, to announce the Student Government vote, and to announce the passage of your resolution. Below is one example.

Sample Press Release

For Immediate Release:

[Date]

[Organization name]

[telephone number, and e-mail]

University Student Government to Consider Resolution to Defend the Bill of Rights

[Location, date]: Student government member [Name] will introduce a Resolution to Defend the Bill of Rights to the [Student Government] at its meeting on [Day of the week, date, and time] in [location]. The resolution addresses student concerns that the USA PATRIOT Act and related counter-terrorism laws and policies threaten academic freedom and key rights guaranteed to U.S. citizens and non-citizens by the Bill of Rights of the Constitution, such as freedom of speech, assembly, and privacy; the right to counsel and due process in judicial proceedings; and protection from unreasonable searches and seizures.

The resolution highlights government policies that directly affect students, such as the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) and Special Registration (NSEERS), which increase the burden for foreign students, and particularly students from Arab and Muslim countries, to travel to and study in the United States. [Coalition member x] said, "International students are a vital part of our campus community. We feel it is important to protect the diversity of our campus."

The resolution calls on campus administrators, the campus library, and the campus police force to act in a way that protects the civil rights and liberties of our campus community. [Student Government member x] remarked that, "Students have historically had a critical role in social justice movements, and I am happy to see our student government continuing that trend. I encourage my fellow [Student Government] members to join me in standing up against government policy that threatens the heart of academic freedom on our campus."

At the student government meeting, members of [your coalition], a campus organization that has actively worked on the issue, will present a petition supporting the resolution, which has been signed by [x#] of students. [You can then provide a little history on your coalition and other activities you have organized].

[The last paragraph should be short, but can include some additional information on the grassroots movement to protect our civil rights and liberties. For talking points, visit www.bordc.org]

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About Letters to the Editor

On many campuses, writing a letter to the editor can be an easy and effective way to inform other students about an issue that concerns you. Every campus paper has different rules about writing and submitting letters to the editor, so you should contact a member of the editorial staff as a first step. As a general rule, you should keep the letter short; however, sometimes the editor may ask you to expand your letter into a full-blown op-ed. On some campuses you may be able to write a letter to the editor as a petition or sign-on letter (see sample #2). Both of the samples and several published op-eds are available at www.bordc.org/Student.htm.

Sample Letters to the Editor

Sample #1

In an attempt to prevent a repetition of the horrific attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States Government has taken unprecedented steps to withhold the rights of individuals merely on government speculations. Although the American media has projected images of Guantanamo Bay and other detention centers, most people in the United States have not felt the impact of such rights violations in their lives and communities. While these horrors may seem distant and impossible, the realities of the government's counterterrorism law and policy, such as the USA PATRIOT Act, hit close to home. The educational freedoms of students, faculty, and staff are being encroached upon:

- Government officials now have access to library, academic, and medical records through the USA PATRIOT Act.
- The government can carry out "sneak and peek" searches through our dorm rooms and homes without our knowledge.
- Members of our campus police or local law enforcement may monitor our peaceful demonstrations, rallies, and other educational events.

Moreover, counterterrorism policy has unjustly targeted international students. The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) demands that our international student peers pay a \$100 fee that will finance their own surveillance. While SEVIS is most devastating to international students because of its blatant racism, it impacts all of us. If international students do not feel safe on our campuses they will not return, and the quality of our education, communities, and lives will suffer.

Our campus community needs to think about the lessons of U.S. history, such as McCarthyism and the U.S. internment of Japanese Americans. While the violations of civil liberties continue to grow, we need to recognize that these violations impact each one of us. Every person should ask where the United States is headed. Our campus community cannot tacitly accept the encroaching threats to our civil liberties. Both our educational freedoms and our rights as human beings are being threatened.

[Your coalition] calls on students, faculty, and staff to join us in opposing counterterrorism laws and policies that threaten our civil liberties. We invite you to a public forum [when and where] to educate the campus about these laws and policies. Additionally, we encourage students to contact their student government representatives and ask them to pass a resolution making our campus a civil liberties safe zone. Visit [coalition website] for more information.

Sample #2

We the undersigned call on the members of the [Student Government] to pass the upcoming resolution defending our civil rights and liberties. The resolution urges campus administrators, the campus library, and the campus police force to act in a way that protects academic freedom from government law and policy, such as the USA PATRIOT Act, which threaten that educational right.

About Outreach Letters

Outreach letters can be an effective way to build support for your coalition. However, the letter will only be successful when you follow-up with the people and organizations you send it to. As always, personal meetings are much more effective than written correspondence. If you know the person, make a phone call or meet for coffee rather than writing a letter.

You can send an outreach letter to supportive and interested organizations (both on and off-campus), campus leaders, student government members, professors, and administration. You should tailor the “ask” portion of the letter (the third paragraph in the sample below) based on who you are asking. For instance, if you’re organizing a panel discussion, you might ask another student organization to co-sponsor or you might ask a professor to be a member of the panel. If you’re trying to gain support for your student government resolution, you might ask another organization to aid in your petition efforts or ask a professor, administrator, or campus librarian to write a letter in support of the resolution.

Also, if you have a personal connection with the person to whom you’re sending the letter, mention that in the first paragraph. The more personal you make the letter, the more likely the receiver will respond.

As one of the first steps of your campaign, you should brainstorm a list of all the different organizations and people that might be interested in your campaign. To identify your allies, consider:

- Who cares about this issue? Who is most affected by this issue?
- Would they share our campaign goals?
- What are their strengths? How can they contribute? How can we work together effectively?

Sample Outreach Letter

Dear [Name],

Since the terrible terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the USA PATRIOT Act and related administrative law and policy have taken a strong hold on our country and our campus. These policies have eroded the checks and balances of our government used to protect students and faculty on American campuses. They threaten academic freedom, not only impacting our academic studies but our political and religious organizations, art activities, and our day-to-day living.

In response to these concerns, the [your coalition] has been formed. The coalition works to defend campus diversity and the ability of our campus community to speak, act, associate, assemble, and maintain personal privacy without fear of government surveillance or reprisal. Right now, our efforts are focused on passing a [Student Government] resolution making our campus a civil liberties safe zone.

To make this coalition truly effective and powerful, we need the support of [who you are sending the letter to]. Your influence and involvement will send a strong message to the community that our campus will not stand for the violation of our rights and freedoms. We ask you to support our efforts by speaking at our events; allowing us to come to one of your meeting to describe our coalition, answer questions, and sign up additional supporters; and helping us to petition and outreach to other organizations.

For more information on threats to civil liberties, and the national grassroots movement to defend the Bill of Rights, visit www.bordc.org. If you have any additional questions, or if you would like to meet to discuss how you can work with [your coalition], please let me know.

Best regards,
[Your name]

Working with Faculty and Staff

By working with faculty and staff, you can gain much needed credibility for your resolution campaign. Administrators and other campus employees will be responsible for carrying out the spirit of your resolution, so it is vital that you garner their support before the resolution passes. The sections below suggest how you can work with different faculty and staff members.

Professors

Professors are knowledgeable and well spoken. In some cases have witnessed decades of student organizing. They can speak at events, talk to administrators, suggest contacts and campus programs to tap, and encourage their students to become involved in your campaign. In addition to asking for their formal endorsement of your resolution, you can request that they make announcements in their classes or assign extra credit activities relating to your campaign.

Librarians and Bookstore Managers

A provision of the USA PATRIOT Act that has received a lot of attention is Section 215, which allows intelligence officers to request patron records from libraries and bookstores. See www.bordc.org/freedomtoread for more information. Working with librarians and bookstore managers to oppose this section can effectively increase publicity for your campaign. Ask your campus librarian or bookstore manager to post a warning about Section 215 on a counter or circulation desk (see sample resolution on page 5 for a sample warning) and to spread the word about threats to reader privacy.

International Student Office

Counterterrorism laws and policies, such as SEVIS, impact international students, so the International Student Office may be interested in helping with your campaign. You can also ask them for a list of international students and international student organizations that you could then contact about your campaign. However, be aware that international students have more to risk by becoming politically involved. They could be subjected to increased monitoring or deportation.

Deans and other Administrators

Getting a Dean or other campus administrator to endorse your resolution could bring a big boost to your campaign. Consider having a personal meeting with the Dean of Students or President of the College. Bring a draft of the resolution and ask them what they think about it. If you get their support before the resolution passes, they will be more likely to implement it once it does.

Campus Police

Although you may be intimidated to speak to campus police officers, getting their endorsement could greatly help your campaign. Arrange a meeting to ask police officers what they think about the investigative powers of the USA PATRIOT Act and how they are implementing the USA PATRIOT Act on campus. It may turn out that they're equally upset with the current threats to civil liberties. It may also be helpful to research your school's policies and guidelines, to learn more about the policies and procedures of your Campus Police.

Other Campus Employees

Campus employees such as secretaries, food service workers, and custodial employees should not be forgotten in your coalition efforts. They are just as vital to the educational community as teachers and students, and will be just as interested in preserving civil liberties. Additionally, many of these employees may be members of targeted communities who are feeling the brunt of post-9/11 laws and policies.

