

For Immediate Release
Bloomington City Council-Member Sydney Zulich
April 29, 2024

Statement Regarding the Violation of First Amendment Rights on IUB Campus

Due to a quick escalation of events, it has been difficult to verify specific information on how events at Dunn Meadow have unfolded. The following is my current understanding of the timeline and course of events, and thus what I will be responding to:*

After discovering a group of students' plans to host a peaceful protest in Dunn Meadow, President Whitten convened an ad hoc committee to change the procedure on what is and is not allowed in Dunn, thus overturning 50+ years of precedent in both policy and community norms. The administration then failed to alert students, faculty, and staff to a policy change that took place less than 24 hours prior to the start of the protest. At this point, both IUPD and State Police were deployed, resulting in the arrest of over 50 students, faculty, and staff. I am specifically referring to new rules that prevent tents and other temporary or permanent structures from being constructed in the area at all times, as opposed to the previous policy that only barred encampments from the hours of 11 PM to 6 AM.

The **1969 policy** is the following:

“Any sign, symbol or structure which is either (a) continually carried or (b) taken away from 11:00 p.m. until 6:00 a.m., may be used in the Assembly Ground, day or night, to express any point of view on any subject, with or without advance notice, within the limits of applicable laws or regulations.”

The **new policy** reads: “No unapproved temporary or permanent structures are permitted, including but not limited to tents.”

After 50 years of precedent, it is impossible to look at this change as anything less than blatant discrimination and an unacceptable violation of the first amendment. We do not get to pick and choose the circumstances under which we uphold the Constitution of the United States: a document that I swore to protect when I began my term as the Bloomington City Council Representative of District 6. There is nothing more American than the First Amendment. Nothing more American than Freedom of Speech and Freedom of Assembly.

I believe that the minute a leader chooses to prioritize procedure over **people**, is the same minute that leader has failed. President Whitten and her administration have not only failed us in this regard, but have proven that they are willing to weaponize procedures with the goal of targeting specific members of our IU community. I observed over five hours of protesting this weekend, and saw no evidence of violence or weapons. This was a ***peaceful protest***.

I have been thinking a lot about civil disobedience recently. In my final thoughts, I want to leave my community with a few quotes from historical leaders whom I admire:

“An unjust law is itself a species of violence. Arrest for its breach is more so.”
– Mahatma Gandhi

“An individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust, and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment in order to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the highest respect for the law.”
– Dr. Martin Luther King Jr

“Protest beyond the law is not a departure from democracy; it is absolutely essential to it.” – Howard Zinn

“It is not always the same thing to be a good man and a good citizen.” – Aristotle

“It was civil disobedience that won them their civil rights.” – Tariq Ali

District 6, it is the honor of a lifetime to represent you. I am so proud and humbled to represent a people that are willing to sacrifice so much to stand up for what they believe in. A people that have remained peaceful in the face of violence. My only hope is that I can lead in a way that will make you as proud of me, as I am of you.

With Love,
Council-Member Sydney Zulich



*Please reach out to me at sydney.zulich@bloomington.in.gov if you have more information or if you need legal aid, emergency housing, or any other assistance that I may be able to provide.