



Santa Clara County Democratic Party
Statement on Campus Protests
May 15, 2024

Like many Americans, we've watched with great concern as police have been used in recent instances to break up peaceful campus protests, in some cases resulting in violent confrontations. Such interactions risk harm to students, bystanders, and officers, and should not happen with peaceful protestors. More fundamentally, in a number of cases, campus administrators and local officials appear to have taken such measures for the wrong reasons and/or without sufficient respect for the free speech rights of their college students.

We urge campus administrators, local authorities, protestors, and other community members to act with the following principles in mind:

- All students, including Arab/Arab-American, Jewish, Palestinian, and other vulnerable populations, should be and feel safe on campus, regardless of their identity or views
- All students should be free to express their views, through speech and peaceful action, without fear of harm or censorship
 - this includes the right to express, exchange, and hold opposing or controversial views, even on the most challenging issues of the day, even if the views or the way they're expressed are hurtful to others, so long as one does not threaten, celebrate, or encourage violence, hostility, or discrimination against a person or group based on who they are
- Universities should designate meaningful, centrally-located spaces for free speech, where students can engage in free speech activities without undue impact on others' safety, sense of security, or access to campus facilities
 - mere inconvenience, discomfort, or disagreement with the opinions or how students express themselves does not justify police or disciplinary action
 - where possible, schools should follow the example of universities that have negotiated a resolution
- If present, police should protect protestors and others from harm, and they should not be used to forcibly remove from campus spaces members of the college/university community engaging in peaceful protest in a safe manner
- If present, police should follow best practices for conflict avoidance and de-escalation
- The harmful conduct or speech of few should not be used to condemn or justify aggressive action toward all, and no action should be taken against peaceful protestors based on pressure from elected officials or university donors
- Protestors must be protected from harassment and violence, whether from counter-protestors, the police, or anyone else
- Those not protesting also must be protected from harassment and violence
 - This may be especially true with respect to those who are identifiable as a member of a community that might be targeted, such as due to their religious or cultural attire or other attributes

We hope that by following the above principles students will be able to be heard and protected from harm while engaging in peaceful protest. We encourage all members of our college and university communities to seek peace, security, opportunity, and democracy for all.

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