**LAW CLASS**

**The First Amendment**

**FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY**

There once was a time in our history when you could be arrested for gathering or assembling on a public street. Since the signing of the Bill of Rights, this is no longer true. The First Amendment protects your freedom to assemble or petition the government.

“Down with Segregation,”

“Troops Out Now,”

“Support our Troops” and

“Si, se puede” (“Yes, we can” in Spanish)

These are examples of chants and picket signs that have been part of peaceful demonstrations throughout our country over the course of history.

Civil rights demonstrators on both sides of the war debate, striking workers, immigrant rights supporters and other concerned community members have taken to the streets, chanting, marching and raising picket signs in an effort to gain public support for their particular cause.

These actions represent the right to a peaceful, non-violent assembly. You can gather peacefully in a public setting and encourage support from others on a matter important to you without the government stepping in.

The government may limit the time, place and manner, but the limits must be reasonable and fair. The key idea is that the government cannot forbid you and others from assembling to discuss or protest issues, especially if the assembly is peaceful and does not present a danger to others.