**LAW CLASS**

**The First Amendment**

**FREEDOM OF SPEECH**

Freedom of speech means that you can share your opinions and exchange ideas freely without the government controlling the content of what you say.

However, this wasn’t always true. There was a time when freedom of speech was only for the rich and powerful. In the early days of the colonies, royal governors, clergymen and a powerful few were the only ones allowed to speak their minds and opinions. Speaking out against things you didn’t like could send you to jail. Now, thanks to the First Amendment, this is no longer possible in the United States.

As a student, you have the right to express your opinion at school. Students often bring attention to their favorite causes by wearing armbands, t-shirts, buttons, etc. However, freedom of speech rights are not absolute in a school and may be restricted somewhat to ensure a safe learning environment for all students. School officials, such as the principal and teachers, have the right to restrict some type of student behavior, such as cursing at teachers in the classroom or hallway.

In school, as a student, you do have the right to express your opinions, but your speech may be restricted if it

(1) substantially and materially interferes with school activities and objectives,

(2) interferes with another individual’s rights,

(3) is a "true threat": it threatens immediate harm to an individual, the school or community or

(4) promotes illegal drug use.