

Statement on Academic Freedom
American Political Science Association
April 17, 2007

The substance of politics frequently elicits passion because there is so much at stake — from the allocation of resources, to questions of national or ethnic identity, to the causes and consequences of war. Political scientists conduct research on, or teach about, some of the most controversial and difficult subjects of our time and although political science faculty should not tell students how to vote or what to think, they must be free to teach the subject of politics in ways that help students evaluate evidence and understand competing arguments.

The American Political Science Association unconditionally supports academic freedom and endorses in whole the American Association of University Professors 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure with 1970 Interpretive Comments, as revised in 1990. The APSA calls particular attention to the Statement's declaration that: "the common good depends upon the free search for truth and its free exposition. ... Freedom in research is fundamental to the advancement of truth. Academic freedom in its teaching aspect is fundamental for the protection of the rights of the teacher in teaching and of the student to freedom in learning."

Without such freedom, knowledge cannot be developed, opinions cannot be tested against evidence, and students will not learn as deeply as they might otherwise. All academics, no matter how controversial their subject, must be able to conduct research and teach without fear of intimidation or harassment.

Political scientists as well as other academics have been subjected to harassment and intimidation because of their political views. Such harassment may take the form of name-calling or disruption of classes. Members of the administration may even warn faculty of adverse consequences if they air their views on particular subjects.

The APSA will encourage universities to support scholars who have been subjected to such campaigns. Although some universities have forcefully defended academic freedom, such attacks seem to be growing in the United States. In this climate, we urge all university administrators, including, department chairs, deans, provosts, and presidents to protect their faculty's academic freedom.

When individual scholars are attacked because of their views, the university has an obligation to respond by publicly supporting academic freedom. The APSA also urges universities to adopt the following principles:

- to provide appropriate resources, including legal counsel, to faculty members who become subject to campaigns of intimidation or harassment, in order to counter such attacks; and
- to sponsor public forums or speakers' series, to discuss the principles of free academic inquiry and/or the substance of the disputed issues.