



## APSA Statement on Testimony from Florida Faculty

On behalf of the American Political Science Association, we strongly condemn the University of Florida's [unprecedented decision](#) to deny political scientists the opportunity to provide expert testimony on Senate Bill 90, a new restrictive Florida election law. This denial is an affront to the university's commitment to academic freedom and must be reversed.

Academics frequently provide expert testimony related to their research, and it is routine for them to be paid to do so. In their October 30 [statement](#), the university argued that they denied the requests for faculty to "undertake outside paid work adverse to the university's interests as a state of Florida institution." The university's suggestion that faculty cannot share analysis based on their research and expertise when their findings contradict the government's political position could have a chilling effect upon faculty members' exercise of their academic freedom. The university has since [stated](#) faculty may testify without receiving compensation. This is still a change that discourages academics' speech. Public universities must protect the independence of their faculty, their right to speech, and the freedom of academic inquiry.

The university has stated it will undergo a review "to ensure the [conflict of interest] policy advances the university's interests while protecting academic freedom." Universities in the United States, and particularly land grant universities like the University of Florida, have historically embraced their institutional role of serving the needs of the people of the state. Even if the scholars are able to testify pro bono, the University of Florida's actions represent a troubling reimagining of the role of the university in society. By discouraging testimony and asserting that engagement should align with the interests of the state or its funders, the university suggests it will shift its focus from serving the public at large through informed research, training, and non-partisan public engagement to only serving the public when it aligns with the interests of partisans in power.

Drs. Sharon Wright Austin, Michael McDonald, and Daniel A. Smith study the foundations of the United States' democracy and provide necessary insight into the health of our elections and political participation. They are nationally recognized experts in their respective areas. Restricting their ability to comment on Senate Bill 90 or any of the state's activities does a great disservice to democracy in the state and nation. The University of Florida must reverse this decision and allow them to testify with compensation for their time and expertise.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Ishiyama'.

John Ishiyama  
President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lisa Martin'.

Lisa Martin  
President-Elect

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier'.

Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier  
Past President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steven Rathgeb Smith'.

Steven Rathgeb Smith  
Executive Director