



IMPACT REPORT JUNE 2024

It's been a wild ride for free speech issues in the first half of 2024. This brief report covers the highlights of what's been a pivotal moment for FIRE on the national stage. While responding to a campus crisis, we also continued our daily work and made progress toward our overall goals. FIRE is leading the national movement for free speech — and that movement is only growing, thanks to your support.

Advocacy

We continued growing our **Litigation** team into a world-class First Amendment legal shop. Our attorneys have been hard at work, actively litigating a **docket of 21 cases** to defend First Amendment rights in courts nationwide.

They are sticking up for everyday Americans whose rights were violated, challenging bad legislation, defending students and faculty, and more.



Right: Plaintiffs Mary Hall-Rayford, Cindy Federle, and Karen Mouradjian with FIRE attorney Conor Fitzpatrick. Melissa Kremer, Lasting Memories Photography

Consider a few of the team's many accomplishments:

- Remember this [viral video](#) of Eastpointe, Michigan's mayor shouting over residents to silence their criticism? That scene prompted FIRE to file a lawsuit in November 2022. We're proud to report that not only did we **win a settlement**, but the city also agreed to establish September 6 as an annual "First Amendment Day." It also paid each plaintiff \$17,910 — a sum representing the year of the First Amendment's ratification (1791) — plus attorneys' fees, for a total of \$83,000.
- [Priscilla Villarreal](#) is an independent journalist who isn't shy about criticizing government officials — which is why she's been targeted by them. In fact, police were so desperate to shut her up that they dusted off a decades-old statute local officials had never used before in order to put a warrant out for her arrest. Priscilla has been fighting that injustice for years, and this spring, **FIRE asked the Supreme Court to consider her case**. More than 40 individuals and organizations contributed *amicus curiae* — "[friend of the court](#)" — briefs supporting this effort!
- We filed **nine amicus briefs**. We file these briefs to weigh in on cases we're not directly litigating, but which have key First Amendment implications. One of these briefs helped secure a **unanimous victory** at the Supreme Court, which ensures that government officials "cannot coerce a private party to punish or suppress disfavored speech" on their behalf.

Meanwhile, FIRE's **Campus Rights Advocacy** and **Public Advocacy** teams worked outside of court to vindicate the rights of students, faculty, and citizens alike. This year, these all-star teams have managed a caseload of more than **130 active cases** and have secured **25 victories** so far! That includes:

- Defeating a [blanket suspension of Greek life](#) at the University of Maryland.
- Getting [charges dropped](#) against two Dartmouth College student journalists who were arrested while covering campus protests.
- Ensuring that public elementary school students are not [compelled to recite the Pledge of Allegiance](#).

And we didn't just advocate on behalf of individuals. Our **Legislative and Policy** team:

- Helped **defeat six state bills** that threatened individual rights.
- Had its model legislation passed in [Utah](#), [Kansas](#), and Indiana.
- Undertook efforts at the federal level, which included our response to the April release of new [Title IX regulations](#) that roll back due process protections for students accused of sexual misconduct.



Education & Mobilization

2024 has offered no shortage of free speech controversies that have captured the nation's attention. Thanks to FIRE's principled, clear-eyed analysis, we have emerged as a thought leader on First Amendment issues and are increasingly leading the national conversation. Since January, we have been **mentioned in the media more than 6,000 times**, and FIRE staffers have been featured on [CBS](#), [PBS](#), [CNN](#), and [NPR](#).

All of this was supported by **groundbreaking research** that is educating the public and jumpstarting reform:

- Our annual **College Free Speech Rankings** were repeatedly cited throughout the campus unrest over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including in multiple congressional hearings. Meanwhile, our **Campus Deplatforming Database** revealed that 2023 was the worst year on record for deplatforming attempts, with 2024 on track to beat it.
- Our Policy Reform team cataloged campus policies that violate college students' free speech rights, then leveraged that data to help **four more schools earn FIRE's "green light"** rating, reserved for schools that maintain no policies that seriously imperil expression.

All of this attention is growing FIRE's base of support. We are working to build a million-person movement by the start of 2025, and **we're thrilled to report that we're already 920,000 strong and growing every day**. Every one of these individuals has the opportunity to be a powerful counterweight to the culture of illiberalism when they join us in taking action on behalf of free speech.

Many of them already have, taking part in one of the nine take-action campaigns FIRE launched this year. Consider our **campaign** to pressure colleges nationwide to adopt institutional neutrality. Subsequently, **Harvard University**, **Stanford University**, Syracuse University, and Purdue University have **committed to not publishing institutional statements on hot-button social and political issues!** Meanwhile, MIT announced it would **stop using DEI statements** in faculty hiring, with Harvard's Faculty of Arts and Sciences joining just weeks later.

FIRE is working to capitalize on this momentum by continuing to build our faculty, student, and alumni networks, leveraging relationships to push for reform, and seeking creative ways to share our message about open inquiry.



By any measure, FIRE continues to punch above our weight. With our members behind us, we're sure to keep gaining steam, and we look forward to all we'll accomplish during the rest of 2024.
