



# The Silencing of Student Voices

preserving free speech in america's schools

David L. Hudson Jr.



**David L. Hudson Jr.** is a research attorney at the First Amendment Center. Hudson writes for [firstamendmentcenter.org](http://firstamendmentcenter.org) and for other publications devoted to First Amendment issues.

Hudson is a First Amendment contributing editor for the American Bar Association's Preview of United States Supreme Court Cases. His articles have been published in *The National Law Journal*, the *ABA Journal* and the *Tennessee Bar Journal*. He is a member of the First Amendment Lawyers Association.

Hudson graduated from Duke University in 1990 and obtained a law degree from Vanderbilt University Law School in 1994. He has been licensed to practice law in Tennessee since 1994.

After working as a judicial law clerk, Hudson joined the First Amendment Center in 1995. He also teaches classes in legal research, torts, ethics and employment rights at Southeastern Career College. Hudson has written books for young people on the Bill of Rights and the 14th Amendment.

The First Amendment Center works to preserve and protect First Amendment freedoms through information and education. The center serves as a forum for the study and exploration of free-expression issues, including the freedoms of speech, press and religion and the rights to assemble and to petition the government.

The center is housed in the John Seigenthaler Center at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tenn. It also has offices in Arlington, Va. It is an operating program of the Freedom Forum, a nonpartisan foundation dedicated to free press, free speech and free spirit for all people.



America's public schools face a litany of problems — school violence, drugs, sexual abuse and others — as they attempt to educate the nation's youth.

But some school officials' responses to these problems, while well-intentioned, may go too far.

Schools are clamping down on many kinds of student expression deemed different or unusual. New "zero-tolerance" policies impose harsh penalties on first-time offenders. Officials have controlled language, censored students' personal Web sites, established strict dress codes, banned symbols and tossed out books.

"The Silencing of Student Voices" takes a look at these issues and asks whether such policies — meant to protect students — actually may be trampling on their First Amendment rights.

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