

January 12, 2004

Dr. Helen Mamarchev, General Counsel Renee Smith Byas, the Executive Committee of the Academic Senate, and the Administrative Affairs and Budget Committee of the Academic Senate:

We wish to draw your attention to a problem with certain Illinois State University policies and/or their interpretation by administrators. Because of this issue, we believe that our constitutional rights to free speech may have been infringed by the university. More important, we believe that the policies (as apparently interpreted) are contrary to the university's educational mission.

We represent Mobilizing Activists and Students for Hemp, a/k/a M.A.S.H. (a Registered Student Organization). Our goals include educating students and other interested parties about the environmental, nutritional, industrial and economic values of the hemp plant, the current scientific knowledgebase of medicinal marijuana, and the importance of being actively involved politically regarding hemp and marijuana legislation.

On December 4, 2003, we held an educational/entertainment event called Hempfest (an activity sponsored in part by Student Fees) in the Bowling and Billiards Center Activity Room. We were denied permission (by the Associate Director of University Housing) to post our flyers in Residence Halls, based solely on the content of the speech — the use of the word Hempfest and the presence of a drawing of a hemp leaf on the flyer — citing university policy. We appealed the decision and were once again denied permission by the Director of University Housing — again based solely on the content of the speech, and again citing university policy.

We ask that you review the attached materials, and take what steps you deem appropriate to revise or clarify the policies so this doesn't happen again. (We understand coincidentally that the policy in question is up for review in the Academic Senate.) We also ask your assistance in obtaining written clarification soon, so we will be able to promote our spring Hempfest.

Thanks for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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Attachments:

Informal constitutional analysis of the university policy with additional notes
Copy of the flyer
Denial letter from the Associate Director
Appeal denial letter from the Director
Petition signed by students attending Hempfest

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