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### **Iowa State Vows to Protect Students' First Amendment Rights after SLF's Legal Inquiry**

(Dec. 23, 2022) Ames, IA: Following [Southeastern Legal Foundation's](#) (SLF's) [inquiry](#) into its tabling policy, Iowa State University has [vowed](#) to protect students' freedom of speech. Tabling is a popular form of speech on college campuses, where students use university tables to set up displays, hand out flyers, and engage in speech activities in public areas of campus. In a [letter](#) to the University, SLF expressed concern that the University's [tabling policy](#) was unconstitutional because, according to the University's website, it limited the number of reservations students could make each semester and required students to reserve a table weeks in advance. In these ways, students were required to plan their speech activities far in advance, and more active groups would be penalized because they could only reserve a table so many times.

In [response](#) to SLF, Iowa State clarified a few key points in its policy to ensure that speech would be protected going forward. First, it explained that there are several ways for students to communicate with other students in addition to tabling, including distributing materials in the student union and other campus buildings and sending mass emails to the entire student body. The University also clarified that students do not need to reserve a table weeks in advance to engage in tabling. Instead, students may use any table that has not already been reserved in the student union.

Acknowledging that these points were not clear on its website, the University agreed to monitor its policy going forward to clarify and improve its reservation guidelines. Most importantly, it expressed its commitment to protect and encourage speech activities for every student on campus.

Director of SLF's [IA Project Cece O'Leary](#) says, "We are glad Iowa State has vowed to review its tabling policy and clarify its procedures regarding speech activities. But this could have been avoided altogether if its policies were clear in the first place. Universities must maintain policies that are sufficiently clear so that students know how to comply. Otherwise, censorship may result because students become deterred from engaging in speech activities."

SLF General Counsel [Kimberly Hermann](#) adds, "Tabling remains a fundamental way for students to get their message across to other students, but it is encouraging to hear that Iowa State provides other ways for students to spread their message on campus. We will continue to monitor speech activities there and ensure that Iowa State students understand the full extent of their rights based on the University's response to our legal inquiry."