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## **Southeastern Legal Foundation Alerts Westfield State University to Unconstitutional Free Speech Violations from Student Government Association**

WESTFIELD, MA (April 22, 2024): [Southeastern Legal Foundation](#) (SLF) sent a [legal demand letter](#) to Westfield State University warning the university that its student government association—which is vested with the sole authority to decide whether to approve or deny a student club on campus—may be violating conservative students’ freedom of speech.

In the fall of 2023, conservative students began the process of forming a recognized chapter of Turning Point USA (TPUSA) on campus. They held a promotional event, where they invited students to approach and write messages on a beach ball advancing free speech. But when the Westfield State Student Government Association (SGA) found out, it released a statement condemning the event and encouraging students to submit complaints about TPUSA using a bias reporting form.

Once the conservative students completed all necessary steps to form a TPUSA chapter—including gathering nearly 40 signatures in support—SGA rejected their application. The reason: SGA claimed that TPUSA’s events and activities were “not congruent” with non-partisan values and that SGA saw a “potential risk” with a TPUSA chapter existing on campus. And in meetings following the denial, SGA members openly applauded SGA’s decision to reject the application because they found TPUSA’s presence “stressful.”

In its [letter](#), SLF reminded Westfield State administrators that viewpoint discrimination is always unconstitutional, and warned the university that SGA’s actions gave every appearance of viewpoint discrimination against TPUSA, beginning with its statement condemning TPUSA’s free speech event and carrying through its communications with TPUSA in the spring. The student members of SGA have been given far too much authority and have abused their discretion at the expense of their constituents’ freedom of speech. And worse still, this abuse of power creates a chilling effect on campus because students are not able to freely speak and associate. SLF now calls on the university to stand with the First Amendment and protect its student’s free speech rights.

Director of Legal Initiatives [Cece O’Leary](#) states, “Freedom of speech and association are vital to our democratic process, and the college experience is no different. Colleges should be welcoming and encouraging diverse viewpoints. But too often, student government associations have no understanding of the First Amendment and blatantly disregard the rights of the students they are supposed to represent. We urge Westfield State administrators to intervene, correct this wrongdoing, and ensure that it does not happen again.”