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April 29, 2024

Dr. Richard A. Carvajal  
President  
Valdosta State University  
president@valdosta.edu

Re: Violation of Georgia's FORUM Act and Students' First Amendment Rights

Dear President Carvajal:

We are writing to you to follow up about the letter we sent on March 12, 2024, regarding free speech policies at Valdosta State University (VSU). As we stated in our letter, VSU may have run afoul of Georgia's FORUM Act, OCGA § 20-3-48, and the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. Recently, we were informed that a VSU official again told students that they could not use the space that they were in for tabling and instructed them to move to VSU's "free speech zone." This action by VSU officials strays from core First Amendment values.

Open discourse on campuses is critical. For many college students, this is the time in their development when they will be exposed to new ideas and perspectives. Shaping the leaders of tomorrow requires universities to provide students with access to share their ideas and hear the ideas of other students. VSU must do its part to ensure this.

SLF requests further clarity about how VSU plans to address speech activities. Students must be allowed and encouraged to exercise their First Amendment rights to speak and assemble freely. It is imperative that students know the University's position on these matters. Every minute that goes by is another minute that they are chilled into silence. Thus, a response from VSU is urgently needed. SLF again urges VSU to (1) amend its policies as necessary to accord with state and federal law and (2) ensure that its staff are enforcing VSU policies in compliance with state and federal law. We further reiterate that VSU should issue a statement acknowledging the error and emphasizing VSU's commitment to open discourse on its campus.

We will be monitoring your decisions closely.

Yours in Freedom,

/s/ Braden Boucek

Braden H. Boucek  
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CC:

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