

The SUNY-Binghamton Case

Case Name: *Young America's Foundation (YAF) v. Stenger*

Case Action: Case filed in Federal Court on July 22, 2020

Significance: Whether public university officials should be held accountable for allowing mobs to silence free speech on campus.

Background: In November of 2019, College Republicans at SUNY-Binghamton and Young America's Foundation invited Dr. Art Laffer to speak on campus on economic policy. A few days before the event, these students set up a table to promote the lecture. However, a large mob formed to "disrupt this disgusting space" and destroy the conservative students' property, all while yelling obscenities in the faces of the three College Republican members. The mob even physically assaulted one student. Instead of dispersing these hostile students, university police ordered the conservative students to leave as the mob chanted "pack it up." Undeterred by this violence, College Republicans and YAF decided to move forward with their event, but the University continued to erect obstacles. On the day of the lecture, university police met Dr. Laffer at the airport to pressure him to get back on a plane and cancel his own event. University officials knew that people planned to disrupt Dr. Laffer's lecture. But instead of taking precautions to prevent disruption, university officials gave the disruptors direct access to the adjacent room and allowed them to flood into the auditorium before the lecture. As Dr. Laffer took the podium, a person with a megaphone stood up and shouted down Dr. Laffer. Meanwhile, university police did nothing to mitigate the mob and instead removed Dr. Laffer from his own event – failing to protect the College Republicans' freedoms once again. This is why ADF and King & Spalding attorneys have filed suit on behalf of the College Republicans and YAF.



Key Points

- Tolerance is a two-way street. Those who shut down free speech and derail lectures because they disagree with the content or views expressed are the exact opposite of tolerant.
- Universities have an obligation to protect the safety of all students, regardless of their viewpoint. When university officials provide an environment for this hostility, facilitate the mob's disruption, and fail to protect students' right to speak, they become complicit in violating students' First Amendment rights.
- The First Amendment protects people of all beliefs. Universities that pick and choose which voices can be heard on campus violate the First Amendment.

Key Facts

- University police bowed to pressure from a violent mob and shut down College Republicans and YAF. Thus, they failed to protect the students' freedom of speech.
- When the College Republicans and YAF tried to host their event, another angry mob, encouraged and facilitated by university officials, disrupted and shut down the lecture. Again, the university chose not to stop this and instead escorted the speaker out of his own event.

The Bottom Line: All students should be able to exercise their constitutionally protected freedoms to peacefully share their views on public university campuses. University officials do not get to pick and choose which students can speak freely on campus.