

1st Amendment

FREE SPEECH CENTER AT MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

# FREEDOM OF SPEECH

2022 ANNUAL REPORT

I AM *true*  
**BLUE**



FREE SPEECH  
CENTER

at Middle Tennessee State University

## **"THE FIRST AMENDMENT—GIVING US THE RIGHT TO SPEAK OUT, PUBLISH OUR THOUGHTS, EMBRACE OUR FAITH, AND MARCH AND PETITION FOR CHANGE—IS THE VERY FOUNDATION OF WHAT MAKES AMERICA . . . AMERICA."**

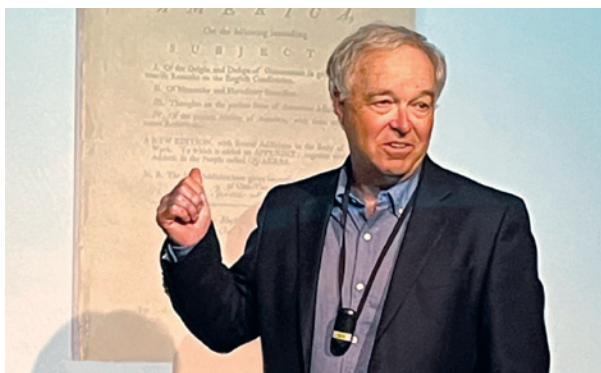
We live in a polarized nation in which many Americans enthusiastically use their free speech but are increasingly unwilling to listen to or tolerate the free speech of others.

Yet it's the give-and-take of civic debate that has long fueled America's quest to become a more perfect union. The First Amendment—giving us the right to speak out, publish our thoughts, embrace our faith, and march and petition for change—is the very foundation of what makes America . . . America.

The Free Speech Center, a nonpartisan, nonprofit public-policy center at MTSU, works to build understanding of the First Amendment and Bill of Rights through education, information, and engagement.

The center's mission is to give young people in particular the information and insights they need to be better and more aware citizens. Doing so has placed MTSU at the nation's forefront when it comes to exploring the role of the First Amendment in our free society.

Ken Paulson is director of the center. He is dean emeritus of MTSU's College of Media and Entertainment, and was editor and senior vice president of *USA Today* from 2004 to 2009.



Ken Paulson addresses the Honors College lecture on Thomas Paine and "Common Sense." Photo by Marsha Powers

*"Our students don't know the basic functions of government, and they don't understand how the Constitution works. Little wonder that so many grow up to be citizens who are taken in by misinformation and conspiracy theories."*

*"We're reaching millions of people with information about the First Amendment. The reach has been satisfying and has come at a time when there is probably more hunger for information about these issues than ever before."*

—Ken Paulson

## **IN PRINT BY THE BOOK**

The launch of the First Amendment Press—the first academic press in MTSU's history—led to the publication of insightful new books about First Amendment freedoms. The press also revives important First Amendment books that have gone out of print.

Authors to date include MTSU Honors Dean John Vile, who is an internationally recognized First Amendment expert, and Belmont law professor David Hudson, whose book *The Bill of Rights: The First Ten Amendments* provides a succinct and incisive overview of how this central document in American history protects our basic freedoms.

## **IN THE NEWS MEDIA**

A major component of our mission is to convey accurate information about the First Amendment to the press and public. To that end, we offer a hotline for journalists reporting about First Amendment issues and write about First Amendment developments across the United States. We distribute regular guest columns. More than 70 news organizations interviewed or quoted the center, cited its work, or published its expert commentaries in the past year, including:

- Agence France-Presse
- Associated Press
- WGN Radio
- CBS News
- Christian Science Monitor
- Los Angeles Times
- MSN.com
- Philadelphia Inquirer
- Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
- Tennessean
- USA Today
- Wall Street Journal
- Yahoo! News

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Ken Paulson engages the audience as keynote speaker at the Louisiana Broadcasters Association Conference in New Orleans. Photo by Patrick Niddrie



# IN THE CLASSROOM

## LENDING A HAND

The First Amendment Press also publishes books, teacher's guides, and white papers on the Bill of Rights and free expression for teachers to use.

Lessons in Liberty, the center's newest initiative in First Amendment education, features an unprecedented aggregation of online teaching materials for all teachers from primary school through college.

# 1<sup>AMENDMENT</sup> FOR ALL

## ALL ABOARD

One of the pillars of the Free Speech Center is its 1 for All campaign, which provides online materials, course content, and study guides for teachers who want better resources to teach about the First Amendment. This interactive, educational tool encourages students to submit photos, videos, songs, and stories that reflect the value of freedom in America.

## SPREADING THE WORD

The center manages extensive social media outreach that incorporates celebrities, pop culture, film, and music, all with an eye toward conveying core constitutional principles in an informal, accessible, and intriguing way.

# IN DEPTH

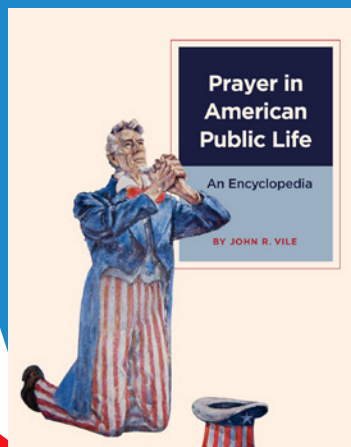
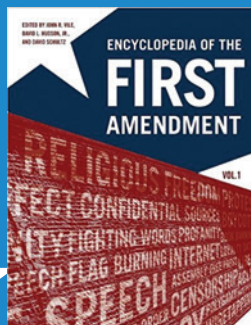
## A TO Z

The center's one-of-a-kind First Amendment Encyclopedia—along with its news website that provides online daily news and insights into free expression—will draw more than 4 million visitors this year.

Since the encyclopedia was added to the website (a joint project of the center and its on-campus partner, MTSU's John Seigenthaler Chair of Excellence in First Amendment Studies), even more teachers and researchers have used and benefited from the site.

The amount of content also has been expanded. It includes essays and entries covering court decisions, doctrines, people, laws, events, issues, and organizations. The encyclopedia now averages 20,000 daily hits and has become hands-down the most comprehensive First Amendment resource available to the public.

The news website also offers a comprehensive repository of First Amendment history and law, and even features a journalist hotline, so reporters from across the country can call MTSU's specialists, seeking their views on First Amendment issues. There is really nothing else like it on the web.





## THE POWER OF MUSIC

2022 saw the launch of the center's new Free Speech in Music award, and the inaugural awardee was Felix Cavaliere, a founding member of the legendary rock band The Rascals.

Presented by the center in partnership with the University's Center for Popular Music and College of Media and Entertainment, the honor recognizes artists who have used their talents, fame, and visibility to address important social issues and who have demonstrated the power of music as a form of free speech.

Cavaliere contributed much through his music and engagement with American society, from the anthemic 1968 hit "People Got to Be Free" to his early commitment to onstage diversity to years of supporting important causes. With The Rascals, he is a member of the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and the Vocal Group Hall of Fame; he also was inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame and Musicians Hall of Fame. His career with The Rascals featured four No. 1 hits, including 1966's "Good Lovin'" and the aforementioned "People Got to Be Free." Both featured Cavaliere's distinctive lead vocals and Hammond B-3 organ. The band, which had 10 top 20 singles and six top 20 albums, also stood up for civil rights, refusing to perform on segregated tours and ensuring that at least half of the artists who performed with them were Black.



Felix Cavaliere, a founding member of the legendary rock band The Rascals.

## THE FREE SPEECH CENTER: IT'S ABOUT CITIZENSHIP

### THROUGHOUT ITS TEACHING AND OUTREACH, THE CENTER EMPHASIZES:

- The need to stay truly informed by selecting reliable and trustworthy news sources
- The importance of engaging in society, encouraging constructive change through the exercise of core freedoms
- Recognizing that free speech is a universal value in our society, and that it is most beneficial when coupled with a willingness to listen in a civil and respectful exchange of ideas

### THE CENTER IS THANKFUL FOR ALL THOSE WHO SUPPORT ITS MISSION.

- The Free Speech Center is a non-profit and non-partisan public policy center dedicated to a better understanding of our First Amendment freedoms. As such, it is dependent upon financial support from those who share our belief that education about our most fundamental freedoms is critical to American democracy. Ensuring that the next generation has a better grasp on liberty than those who came before is an ambitious undertaking, and the center's impact is directly related to its reach.
- Independent funding allows the center to develop classroom programs, teaching guides, educational videos, and grade-specific books. It also allows the center to maintain and expand its First Amendment Encyclopedia and daily First Amendment reports. To support the work of the Free Speech Center, please click on the "Donate" button at the Free Speech Center website [mtsu.edu/first-amendment/](https://mtsu.edu/first-amendment/).

Visit [mtsu.edu/first-amendment/](https://mtsu.edu/first-amendment/) for more information and to support the center's mission.

Drop us a message at [FreeSpeechCenter@mtsu.edu](mailto:FreeSpeechCenter@mtsu.edu).



Fall 2021 "45 Timeless Words" exhibit at the MTSU library. Photos by Emily Flood



# FREE SPEECH CENTER BY THE NUMBERS



**6,777,715**

Annual Website Page Views



**1,858**

Newsletter Subscribers



**3,983,866**

Annual Unique  
Website Visitors



**214**

News Media Appearances



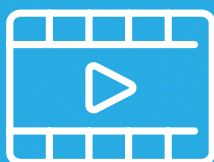
**13,288**

Social Media Followers



**50**

Press Association Partnerships



**11,088**

Video Views



**1**

Amendment



The background of the entire page is a photograph of the Tennessee State Capitol building. The building is a large, classical-style structure with a prominent dome topped by a statue. The sky is a vibrant mix of orange, pink, and purple, indicating a sunset or sunrise. The building's windows are lit up, and the overall scene is bathed in the warm glow of the low sun.

# AMERICA'S #1 SOURCE OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE FIRST AMENDMENT

More than 4 million people a year access the non-partisan and educational Free Speech Center site for information and insight about the First Amendment. **The First Amendment Encyclopedia** is the go-to resource for help with class assignments, term papers, lesson plans, legal research and a meaningful understanding of freedom of expression. Created and overseen by scholars and educators at Middle Tennessee State University, it's an absolutely free resource!

[www.freespeech.center](http://www.freespeech.center)