

Office of the Governor
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June 26, 2017



SPEAKER'S OFFICE

VIA HAND DELIVERY

Honorable Taylor F. Barras
Speaker of the House
Louisiana House of Representatives
Post Office Box 94062
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804-9062

RE: Veto of House Bill 269 of 2017 Regular Session

Dear Speaker Barras:

Please be advised that I have vetoed House Bill 269 of the 2017 Regular Session. This bill is a solution in search of a problem that creates a long, detailed structure for the evaluation of the freedom of expression on college campuses. However, this bill is unnecessary and overly burdensome to our colleges and universities as the freedoms this bill attempts to protect are already well-established by the bedrock principles declared in the First Amendment to the United States Constitution and Article 1, Section 7 of the Louisiana Constitution.

Just last week, the United States Supreme Court reminded us of the importance of protecting free expression by reiterating that "the public expression of ideas may not be prohibited merely because the ideas themselves are offensive to their hearers." *Matal v. Tam*, 582 U.S. ___, 22-23 (2017). This commitment to the freedom of speech is especially important for students attending our public colleges and universities. However, House Bill 269, which requires complex policies for the regulation of freedom of speech, sets up a detailed regime for discipline involving freedom of speech, and establishes a "Committee on free expression" under the Board of Regents, which is overly complicated and would only frustrate the goals it purports to achieve. The protection of speech has survived and flourished in the 226 years since the adoption of the First Amendment and it will continue to do so without House Bill 269 becoming the law of Louisiana. With this in mind, I have chosen to veto House Bill 269.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Bel Edwards".

John Bel Edwards
Governor

cc: Honorable Glenn Koepp