

F I R E

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March 24, 2009

Chancellor Robert C. Holub
University of Massachusetts Amherst
374 Whitmore Administration Building
Amherst, Massachusetts 01003

Sent by U.S. Mail and Facsimile (413-545-2328)

Dear Chancellor Holub,

As you can see from the list of our Directors and Board of Advisors, FIRE unites civil rights and civil liberties leaders, scholars, journalists, and public intellectuals across the political and ideological spectrum on behalf of liberty, due process, legal equality, freedom of association, religious liberty and, in this case, freedom of speech on America's college campuses. Our website, www.thefire.org, will give you a greater sense of our identity and activities.

FIRE is concerned about the threat to freedom of expression posed by University of Massachusetts Amherst's (UMass Amherst's) decision to charge the UMass Amherst Republican Club for extra security due to the expected presence of protesters for a speech by nationally syndicated columnist Don Feder.

This is our understanding of the facts; please inform us if you believe we are in error. On or about February 4, 2009, Republican Club President Greg Collins requested two police officers for a "Lecture on hate crimes" to be presented by Feder on March 11. According to the Agreement for Services of about February 4, two police officers from the UMass Amherst Police Department (UMPD) were to be assigned to the event at a total cost of \$280.48.

After the club put up fliers promoting the speech, a group of students calling themselves the Coalition Against Hate posted fliers that called for people to protest against Feder at the event. The Republican Club learned that protesters indeed planned to attend the event. According to Collins, UMPD strongly urged the club to accept increased security for the event because of the protesters.

A new Agreement for Services thus was drawn up on March 11. This new Agreement for Services stipulated that the club would be charged for extra security for the speech: \$164 for one UMPD police supervisor and \$561 for four UMPD patrol officers, for a total of \$725. This represents an increase of \$444.52.

In order to host a controversial event where protesters are expected, UMass Amherst thus required a student organization to provide hundreds of dollars in extra funding for security. This extra security was provided solely because of the potentially hostile reaction of audience members to the content of the speech. Yet *any* requirement that student organizations hosting controversial events pay for extra security is unconstitutional because it affixes a price tag to events on the basis of their expressive content.

