

Pressing Forward for the Freedom of Speech

Ever since the very first modern newspaper in America, *Publick Occurrences*, was published on September 25, 1690, the press has solidified its place in the importance of freedom in America by serving as an outlet for news and opinion separate from government control. Of course, *Publick Occurrences* was shut down after just four days by the colonial government because it contained “doubtful and uncertain reports,” but it still started a wave of revolutionary proportions with the expansion of newspapers all across America. Eventually, this led to the writing of the Constitution’s First Amendment, forever changing America for the better.

Ninety years after the founding, and subsequent dissolving of *Publick Occurrences*, our founding fathers declared that “there shall be no law prohibiting American citizens from their freedom of religion, expression, and assembly.” It is America’s crowning achievement that these same rights still shine brightly as a beacon for the freedom of speech across the world.

Without the freedom for the press to spread information and news to the masses, corporate and government power would have the ability to oppress and control what becomes common knowledge. While it is true that many news outlets across America have a certain amount of sway to them, if anything, that just shows the beauty of freedom in how we share our voices. I would always choose an America where the news is so free that somebody may alter

facts with opinion, over an America where our voice is so oppressed that I could not find solid and current facts no matter how much I looked.

Within America, there will always be bitter sentiment towards the freedoms the First Amendment protects, such as with people who acrimoniously argue their opinion is the only one that matters, or with those who think that others who don't share their opinions don't deserve their rights. However, it is imperative that not only do we retain the freedom to hold and share our opinion, but also the freedom to argue the opinions of others. It is this argument that lets us, the masses, weigh fact over opinion, and personal thought over widespread deception. Such as it was with Edward R. Murrow, American broadcast journalist, speaking against Mccarthyism, and such as it is with the American people continuing to press forward for truth and freedom.

Above all others, the First Amendment will always hold the most value, because it is we the people who declare no Man, Woman, or God, has, or will ever have, the right to take away our voice. While these may not be the exact words our founding fathers penned 236 years ago, they hold the same meaning, and I daresay, even more power.

2nd Place – Felix Bishop - Clark Street Community School, Middleton - 11th grade