

1st Amendment Guest Column

Under the first amendment, I, as an American citizen, am granted the freedoms of religion, speech, free press, assembly, and the right to petition the government for a redress of grievances. At this point in my life, I feel that the most meaningful parts of this amendment to me are the freedoms of religion and speech.

As a Lutheran Christian, I am extremely grateful everyday of my life that I was born in this country, where I am free to practice my religion without needing to worry about my life possibly being threatened because of what I believe. I understand that this doesn't only protect my life and my beliefs, but the lives and beliefs of millions of people across the U.S. whose right to practice their religion is defended by the government under this amendment.

The freedom of speech that is granted under this amendment is very important to me and what I hope my future will become. As I go into the workforce, I am hoping to pursue a career as a librarian. Through this career, I will aim to encourage children to find their voice, using literature to inspire them creatively. This amendment ensures that all types of literature will be made available to the next generations so that they may become wiser than the ones that came before them.

When I see that a book has been banned, I feel that it is a violation of the first amendment and the freedom of speech that is granted through it. Even if I disagree with the message of the book, I still feel that it should be made available so that all points of view may be made known. Through this, all generations may make educated decisions that will help them improve not only their own lives, but the lives of those around them. I believe that it is possible that any book can be banned because someone, somewhere will find the content uncomfortable. *To Kill A Mockingbird* by Harper Lee has been banned by different establishments before because of its racial content. This is true despite it being a novel that is meant to teach people about racial insensitivity and the value of painful points in history and what we can learn from them.

From my experiences, I know that this amendment is one that I value and cherish and one that I will wield as a tool to forge my future. The first amendment is one that will improve our nation and should never be used as a weapon meant to silence a citizen of the United States who has been provided these rights. These freedoms allotted to me through the first amendment not only affect my past, present, and future, but the past, present, and future of millions of other people throughout the United States of America.

3rd Place – Jorja Stockton - Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Oshkosh - 12th grade