

# AAUP of LSU

Louisiana State University Chapter  
American Association of University Professors  
*Academic Freedom for a Free Society*

## Bill Title

Legislation based on a so-called "Academic Bill of Rights" (HCR 25) has been introduced in the Louisiana House of Representatives on April 26, 2005, and was referred to the House Committee on Education. The announced purpose of the resolution is (see <http://www.legis.state.la.us/billdata/streamdocument.asp?did=298394>):

*“Requests that each of the state's public postsecondary education management boards undertake a complete and thorough review of board policies, rules, and procedures and the policies, rules, and procedures of the institutions under its jurisdiction in order to assure that such policies, rules, and procedures meet guidelines and standards specified in the resolution that are designed to secure the intellectual independence of faculty members and students, protect the principles of academic freedom, promote intellectual diversity, and support the pursuit of knowledge and truth.*

## Our Position

LSU Chapter of the American Association of University Professors urges you to do all that you can to defeat this unwarranted and counterproductive effort.

## Reasoning

The principle of academic freedom has been developed at American universities starting in 1925, codified in 1940, and subsequently refined and adjusted to the demands of changing times, most recently in 1990. This principle is considered to be the cornerstone for the success of the American postsecondary education system, which is the envy of the world. As the American Association of University Professors states (see <http://www.aaup.org/statements/Redbook/1940stat.htm>):

*“Institutions of higher education are conducted for the **common good** and not to further the interest of either the individual teacher or the institution as a whole. **The common good depends upon the free search for truth and its free exposition.***

*Academic freedom is essential to these purposes and applies to both teaching and research. Freedom in research is fundamental to the advancement of truth. Academic freedom in its teaching aspect is fundamental for the protection of the rights of the teacher in teaching and of the student to freedom in learning.”*  
[emphases added]

Accredited American colleges and universities adhere to the principle of academic freedom and all the obligations and responsibilities it entails, in particular to the aspects that the so-called "Academic Bill of Rights" (HCR 25) intends to address (see <http://www.aaup.org/statements/Redbook/1940stat.htm>):

*“Teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject.*

*College and university teachers are citizens, members of a learned profession, and officers of an educational institution. When they speak or write as citizens, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but their*

# AAUP of LSU

Louisiana State University Chapter  
American Association of University Professors  
*Academic Freedom for a Free Society*

Page 2

*special position in the community imposes special obligations. As scholars and educational officers, they should remember that the public may judge their profession and their institution by their utterances. Hence they should at all times be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the institution.”*

In addition, accredited universities regularly (usually on a yearly basis) review the performance of its academic units and faculty on the basis of clearly established and publicly accessible policies and rules (see, for example, <http://appl003.ocs.lsu.edu/ups.nsf/ByNumber?OpenView>).

It seems, therefore, that the "Academic Bill of Rights" (HCR 25) appears to address a non-existent problem. Even more worrisome is the financial implications of the bill, which may not have been considered at the time of its introduction. With the limited budget allocations for postsecondary education in Louisiana, universities and colleges have been ever more hard-pressed to fulfill their mission in education and research. A new unfunded mandate would pose an unconscionable (and unnecessary) burden on them.

Dominique G. Homberger, Ph.D.  
Professor of Biological Sciences  
Vice-President, AAUP-LSU; for the Executive Committee