



# NEWS RELEASE

**Arizona State Legislature**  
**Representative Mark Finchem (R-11)**  
**Representative Bret Roberts (R-11)**  
**Representative Leo Biasiucci (R-5)**  
**Senator Vince Leach (R-11)**

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**Tuesday, April 23, 2019**  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Legislators Criticize Pima County Attorney's Decision to Dismiss Charges Against Students Who Disrupted Class**

**STATE CAPITOL, PHOENIX** – Representatives Mark Finchem (R-11), Bret Roberts (R-11), and Leo Biasiucci (R-5), as well as Senator Vince Leach (R-11), today criticized the Pima County Attorney's Office for dismissing charges against students who disrupted classes on campus of the University of Arizona.

The three students had been charged with interference of the peaceful conduct of an educational institution, and one of the students faced an additional charge of threats and intimidation for disrupting a classroom presentation delivered by the U.S. Border Patrol.

Representative Finchem responded with the following statement:

**“The University of Arizona is a publicly funded, land-grant college charged with higher education where diversity of thought is to be nurtured, and being a place for the open debate of ideas. It is not the exclusive political playground for the indoctrination of a singular social agenda. I have heard from students, alumni, and even professors that the University has become a closed-minded society where some professors encourage disruptive behaviors in the classroom, behaviors which shut down the very free speech that protesters demand they have. Students have told me, ‘We know the socialist garbage our professors are spewing is junk, we just have to please them to get the grade from those who have power.’ Thankfully, there are students and professors who are willing to speak with legislators – an interesting twist on truth to power.**

**“President Robbins is responsible for the administration of the University and seeing to it that students have a safe environment to learn in, which prepares them for the real-world challenges of problem-solving. We stand by President Robbins as he takes a stand for the rule of law. Students who disrupt classrooms with their political protests rob other students of the opportunity to hear messages that they may or may not agree with but are worth hearing to learn critical thinking skills.**

**“The University’s Police Chief was right to charge those who disrupt the process of learning with appropriate criminal charges. The consequence of disruptive criminal behavior by a few students that negatively impacts others is an unfortunate real-world lesson. If convicted of the charges, we also support expulsion. In a civil society that observes the rule of law, actions that meet the elements of a crime ought to be prosecuted, if for no other reason than to preserve the civil society, but of course, the anarchists would disagree. The University has a Student Code of Conduct for a reason, ‘Students may be accountable civilly, criminally, and administratively for acts that are both illegal and constitute violations of the Student Code of Conduct. At the discretion of university officials, disciplinary action at the university may proceed before, during, or after legal proceedings,’ (University of Arizona, Student Code of Conduct, 2019).**

**“We have also been told that professors openly challenge President Robbin's authority as the top administrator, and while he advocates for greater funding, he is undermined by unethical behaviors in his organization. Shame on the Faculty Senate and the closed-minded professors who encourage interference with the operations of the school, so that their personal ideological agenda can be advanced.**

**“If it becomes necessary to terminate the employment of professors, tenured or not, for interfering with university operations, we will stand with President Robbins and the decisions he makes. If the culture is indeed focused on one political ideology, and if it is true that the ideological position has become the centerpiece of all instruction; and if the activity is so pervasive that it threatens the diversity of thought and education, what President Robbins is doing is even more important. Enough is enough, it is time to get back to the mission of this school and move away from a one-sided political ideological swamp.”**

**“This is not a free speech issue - it is a law and order issue,”** said Representative Roberts. **“The University’s grounds are for the most part unrestricted for protesting and peaceful public assembly. However, the classrooms are off limits.”**

**“Officials from the U.S. Border Patrol were invited on campus to deliver a classroom presentation, and the University of Arizona took appropriate measures to protect the free speech rights of all students,”** said Senator Leach. **“It’s unfortunate that the Pima County Attorney has decided that the rights of some students are more important than others. Because this incident occurred at one of our state universities, the Arizona Attorney General should pursue the matter.”**

**“As an alumnus, I’m proud that the University of Arizona under President Robbins’ leadership has worked to promote and protect the free speech rights of students,”** said Representative Biasiucci. **“Students should be using ideas and facts to support their positions, not threats and intimidation. The Pima County Attorney’s decision to dismiss these charges is unfortunate, but I’m hopeful that the Attorney General’s office will give it a fair review if asked.”**

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