

December 11, 2018

Thayne M. McCulloh, D.Phil.
President, Gonzaga University
502 East Boone Avenue
Spokane, WA 99258

Dear President McCulloh:

My colleagues and I formally request Gonzaga University officials reconsider their decision to deny the request made by the university's College Republicans to bring conservative, political commentator Ben Shapiro to the campus to speak.

We are greatly disappointed in the university's decision. Campuses should be places of rigorous, free debate that respects the marketplace of ideas from all people of race, religion, ethnicity or political views. Higher education institutions should welcome opportunities for students to hear people and ideas they have not yet fully considered.

While Gonzaga University is a private institution, students are eligible for state financial aid. State taxpayer dollars should not be used to promote censorship.

Your university website states: "Gonzaga's Jesuit, Catholic, Humanistic education will challenge and inspire you." Denying Mr. Shapiro the opportunity to speak runs contrary to this statement. Please allow Mr. Shapiro to challenge and perhaps inspire your students.

It is also important to remember that Gonzaga University is surrounded by Republican Legislative Districts – including the 4th, 6th, 7th and 9th. It is also located in the middle of the 5th Congressional District, which is represented by a Republican. Many of the residents in these districts, including high school students who might be considering attending Gonzaga University, identify as conservative and want to hear the views of Mr. Shapiro. They also support free speech – regardless of political affiliation or beliefs.

Please do not allow Gonzaga University to become an island of isolated political views. Embrace your surroundings and respect the sentiments of your neighbors in eastern Washington — many of whom hold your institution in high regard and support your students.

We want to ensure Gonzaga University and all state higher education institutions in Washington are accepting of all speakers, visitors and guests.

As the ranking Republican on the House Higher Education Committee, I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Luanne Van Werven
State Representative, 42nd District



Michael Baumgartner
State Senator, 6th District



Matthew T. Shea
State Representative, 4th District



Jim Walsh
State Representative, 19th District



Larry Haler
State Representative, 8th District



Mike Padden
State Senator, 4th District



Bob McCaslin
State Representative, 4th District



Joe Schmick
State Representative, 9th District



Lynda Wilson
State Senator, 17th District



Paul Harris
State Representative, 17th District



Andrew K. Barkis
State Representative, 2nd District



Randy Becker
State Senator, 2nd District



Michelle Caldier
State Representative, 26th District



Phil Fortunato
State Senator, 31st District



Mark Miloscia
State Senator, 30th District



Shelly Short
State Senator, 7th District



Carolyn Eslick
State Representative, 39th District



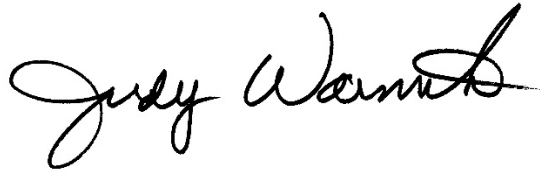
Bill Jenkin
State Representative, 16th District



Tom Dent
State Representative, 13th District



Mark Hargrove
State Representative, 47th District



Judy Warnick
State Senator, 13th District



Jan Angel
State Senator, 26th District



Jay Rodne
State Representative, 5th District

Cc: Judi Biggs Garbuio, Vice President of Student Development