

Stricken language would be deleted from and underlined language would be added to present law.  
Act 395 of the Regular Session

State of Arkansas As Engrossed: H2/4/19 H2/6/19 S2/21/19 S2/28/19

92nd General Assembly

# A Bill

Regular Session, 2019

HOUSE BILL 1231

By: Representatives Lowery, Beck, A. Collins, A. Davis, Della Rosa, D. Garner, Godfrey, J. Mayberry,  
McCullough, Scott, Sorvillo, D. Whitaker, Wing

By: Senator M. Johnson

## For An Act To Be Entitled

AN ACT TO ENSURE THE FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION OF A  
STUDENT JOURNALIST AT A PUBLIC INSTITUTION OF HIGHER  
EDUCATION; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

## Subtitle

TO ENSURE THE FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION OF A  
STUDENT JOURNALIST AT A PUBLIC  
INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

SECTION 1. Arkansas Code Title 6, Chapter 60, is amended to add an  
additional subchapter to read as follows:

### Subchapter 10 – Student Journalists

#### 6-60-1001. Definitions.

##### As used in this subchapter:

(1) "Protected activity" means an expression of free speech or  
freedom of the press as guaranteed by the First Amendment to the United  
States Constitution and Article 2, § 6 of the Arkansas Constitution;

(2)(A) "School-sponsored media" means any material that is:  
(i) Prepared, substantially written, published, or  
broadcast by a student journalist at a public institution of higher  
education;

(ii) Distributed or generally made available to



members of a student body at a public institution of higher education; and  
(iii) Prepared under the direction of a student  
media adviser.

(B) "School-sponsored media" does not include any media  
that is prepared as a communication on behalf of a public institution of  
higher education intended for distribution or transmission;

(3) "Student journalist" means a student at a public institution  
of higher education who engages in journalistic activities as part of a  
formal program of instruction and training at a public institution of higher  
education or as part of a recognized student organization at a public  
institution of higher education by gathering, compiling, writing, editing,  
photographing, or preparing information for dissemination through school-  
sponsored media;

(4) "Student media adviser" means an individual who is employed,  
appointed, or designated by a public institution of higher education to  
supervise or provide instruction to a student journalist with respect to  
school-sponsored media.

6-60-1002. Students' right of expression.

(a)(1) Except as provided in § 6-60-1003, a student journalist has the  
right to engage in protected activities in school-sponsored media.

(2) This right exists regardless of whether the school-sponsored  
media are:

(A) Supported financially by the public institution of  
higher education;

(B) Produced using the facilities of the public  
institution of higher education; or

(C) Produced in conjunction with a class in which the  
student journalist is enrolled at the public institution of higher education.

(b) A student journalist is responsible for determining the news,  
opinions, features, and advertising content of any school-sponsored media,  
except as provided in § 6-60-1003.

(c) This section does not prevent a student media adviser or academic  
supervisor from teaching student journalists professional standards and  
responsibilities with respect to the English language and journalism or using  
professional academic judgment to assign work or evaluate the student

journalist's performance as a journalist.

(d) A student media adviser shall not be dismissed, suspended, or disciplined for:

(1) Protecting a student journalist who engages in a protected activity under this subchapter; or

(2) Refusing to infringe on a student journalist's right to engage in a protected activity under this subchapter.

(e)(1) A student journalist who engages in a protected activity under this chapter does not represent an expression of the policy of a public institution of higher education.

(2) The following institutions and individuals shall not be liable in any civil or criminal action for actions taken by a student journalist who engages in a protected activity under this subchapter:

(A) A public institution of higher education;

(B) An official of a public institution of higher education;

(C) An employee of a public institution of higher education; or

(D) A parent or legal guardian of a student journalist.

6-60-1003. Prohibited expression.

The following types of expression by a student journalist are not protected activities under this subchapter:

(1) School-sponsored media that are libelous, slanderous, or obscene, as defined by state law;

(2) School-sponsored media that constitute an unwarranted invasion of privacy;

(3) School-sponsored media that violate federal or state law; or

(4) School-sponsored media that constitute or incite students as to create:

(A) An unlawful act or a clear and present danger of the commission of an unlawful act;

(B) A violation of a policy of:

(i) The public institution of higher education at which the activity is occurring; or

(ii) The Department of Higher Education; or

(C) A material and substantial disruption of the orderly operation of a public institution of higher education.

(5) School-sponsored media that involve the unauthorized use of the marks or logos of a public institution of higher education.

/s/Lowery

**APPROVED: 3/8/19**