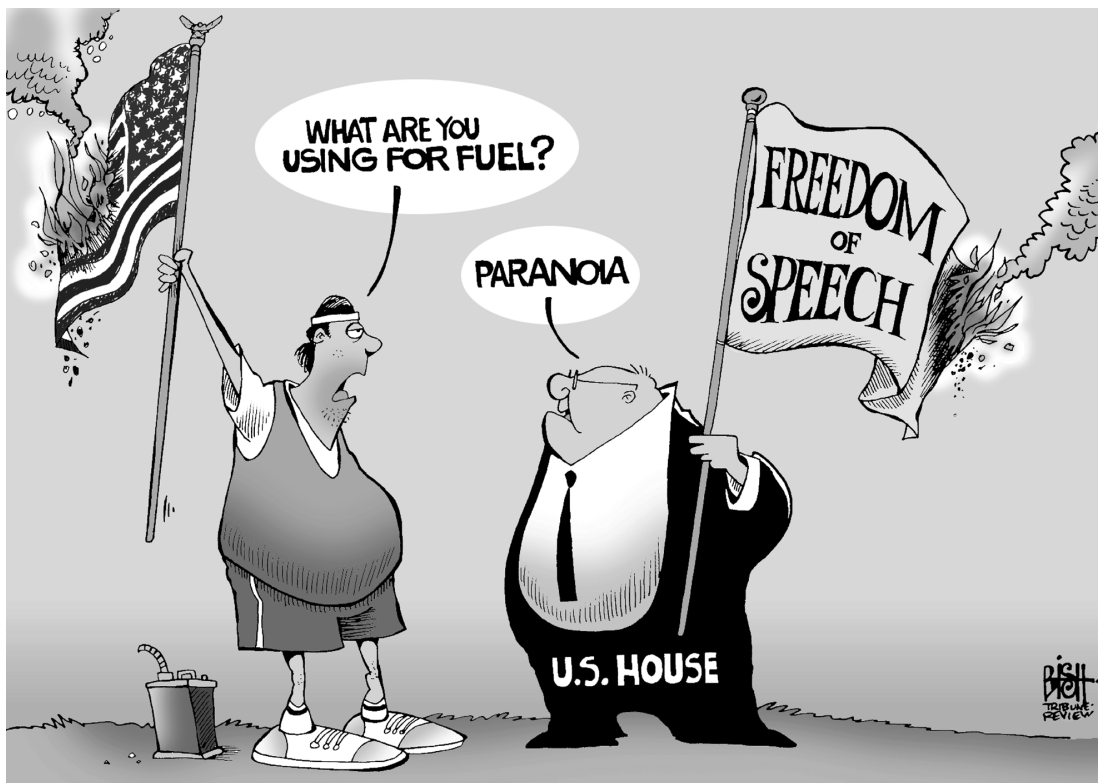


Cartoons for the Classroom

Presented by NIEonline.com and the Association of American Editorial Cartoonists (AAEC)



Cartoon courtesy Randy Bish / Tribune-Review

Between the lines

In late July, 2005, the House passed a resolution: "Proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States authorizing the Congress to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States." The proposal was designed to overturn a 5-4 Supreme Court ruling in 1989 that flag burning is a protected free-speech right.

Why is Freedom of Speech a burning issue?

Cartoonist Doug Marlette says author Kurt Vonnegut once compared the artist to the canary in the coal mine, a hypersensitive creature who alerts hardier life forms to toxic gases by kindly dropping dead. If political cartoonists seem awfully sensitive when it comes to issues involving Freedom of Speech, maybe they're just trying to warn us before it's too late. Cartoonists rely on their First Amendment rights to be able to freely do their jobs -- to inform, to criticize, to persuade, to take our public figures to task for what they do. An issue like prohibiting flag burning certainly has the canary choking on the threat to the First Amendment.

Get out your newspaper

Gather a collection of political cartoons from your newspaper over the next two weeks. Using the Cartoon Evaluation Worksheet (available online at the NIE Website) analyze each cartoon and explain the issues addressed and determine the point of view of the artist.

Talking points

1. Cartoonist Randy Bish suggests that public paranoia is what's fueling the campaign to ban flag burning at the expense of one of our First Amendment rights. Define what he means by paranoia.
2. According to the Freedom Forum website, First Amendment experts regard flag desecration as a form of political expression that should be protected. What argument can you pose refuting that stance? Doesn't the flag deserve protection?
3. On what grounds can you defend flag burning?

Additional resources

Association of American Editorial Cartoonists
<http://editorialcartoonists.com/>

More by Randy Bish
<http://aaeonline.org/cartoon/browse.cfm/BishR/>

More on the Flag Burning Amendment
<http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/>