STUDENT SENATE RESOLUTION 2017-120

TITLE: Resolution Supporting UF President Fuchs’s Decision to Deny the National Policy Institute’s Request for a Venue for Richard Spencer

AUTHORS: Senator Brett Oehrle

SPONSORS: Senate President Jackie Phillips

WHEREAS, the National Policy Institute proposed bringing Richard Spencer, a known “alt-right” white nationalist, to the University of Florida campus on September 12 [1]; and,

WHEREAS, non-university groups, organizations and persons may rent space on campus, provided they cover rental expenses and security costs like all other third-party renters [2]; and,

WHEREAS, free speech is a right protected by the United States Constitution and State of Florida Constitution [3]; and,

WHEREAS, the University of Florida Student Senate has previously recognized the importance of the protection of free speech the University of Florida Administration for its efforts to protect first amendment rights [4] [5]; and,

WHEREAS, University of Florida President W. Kent Fuchs initially informed the student body that the National Policy Institute requested a venue for Richard Spencer to speak [1]; and,

WHEREAS, University of Florida President W. Kent Fuchs condemned hateful speech and symbols of hate, and urges students to “respect one another and promote positive speech” [1]; and,

WHEREAS, on August 12, white supremacists gathered in Charlottesville, VA, and protests formed in reaction to this [6]; and,

WHEREAS, these rallies and protests resulted in violence, injury, and death [6]; and,

WHEREAS, on August 18, University of Florida President W. Kent Fuchs announced that the university would deny the National Policy Institute’s request to host Richard Spencer [7]; and,
WHEREAS, the University of Florida continues to support protecting the First Amendment, however these protections do not require a public institute to risk violence [7]; and,

WHEREAS, the risk for violence was evident following the clashes in Charlottesville, Virginia, as well as calls for violence in Florida on social media and online forums [7].

THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate reaffirms its support of free speech as a protected right.

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate condemns hateful and divisive speech and symbols.

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate supports President Fuchs’s decision to deny the National Policy Institute’s request to host Richard Spencer and recognizes the real risk of violence.

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate encourages students to utilize resources such as U Matter We Care, the Counseling and Wellness Center, the Bias Education and Response Team, Students Taking Action Against Racism, and Multicultural and Diversity Affairs to identify opportunities for support, education, and empowerment.

THEREFORE, LET IT FINALLY BE RESOLVED that while the University of Florida Student Senate supports the protection of free speech as outlined by the United States and Florida Constitutions, the University of Florida Student Senate does not support Richard Spencer or hateful speech and acknowledges the valid risk to the safety of students had he been allowed to speak.

Proviso: A copy of this resolution shall be sent to UF President Kent Fuchs, UF Vice President of Student Affairs Dr. David Parrott, Director of Multicultural and Diversity Affairs William Atkins, and Interim Dean of Students Heather White.