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Contents

I. Overview	1
II. Survey	9
III. Methodology	35

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Overview

By *Kenneth A. Paulson*

The First Amendment, written and ratified at the close of the 18th century, may face its greatest test as we enter the 21st.

While the 45 words of the First Amendment have gone unchanged since their adoption, unchanged does not mean unchallenged. Responses to the “State of the First Amendment 2000” survey suggest that Americans respect the First Amendment as an ideal but are ambivalent when it protects offensive ideas or troubling speech.

In fact, most survey respondents were highly selective in their appreciation of the rights guaranteed by the First Amendment. While they applauded freedom of speech, they were concerned about freedom of the press and knew little about the rights of petition and assembly. Candidates looking for public consensus on First Amendment issues in this election year won't find one.

But First Amendment issues will play a major role in campaigns nationwide. Debates over campaign finance reform, prayers in public schools, vouchers for religious schools, regulation of the Internet and even the burning of the American flag — all will come into play this political season.

Here are some key findings from the “State of the First Amendment 2000” survey:

- **A majority of respondents favored government-imposed restrictions on the amount of money that can be contributed to a candidate's election campaign, even though a majority also agreed that “contributing money to a political candidate is an expression of free speech that should be protected by the Constitution.”**
- **An increasing number of survey respondents said there is too little religious freedom in the United States.**

Kenneth A. Paulson is executive director of the First Amendment Center.

At the same time, a majority indicated that government should be more involved in religion, with teacher-led prayer allowed in public schools and government-funded vouchers for students attending private religious schools.

- **Almost three-quarters of all respondents believed that violence in the media contributes to violence in real life.** Violence on television, in video games and in music was seen as a factor contributing to violence in society — a perception that may explain increasing calls for limitations on certain kinds of expression.

- Even as survey respondents were concerned over the traditional press' exercise of its First Amendment rights, **there was significant support for free speech on the Internet.** Seventy-four percent of respondents agreed that "material on the Internet should have the same First Amendment protections as printed material such as books and newspapers."

The survey was based on telephone interviews with a random national sample of 1,015 adults, conducted April 13-26, 2000, by the Center for Survey Research and Analysis at the

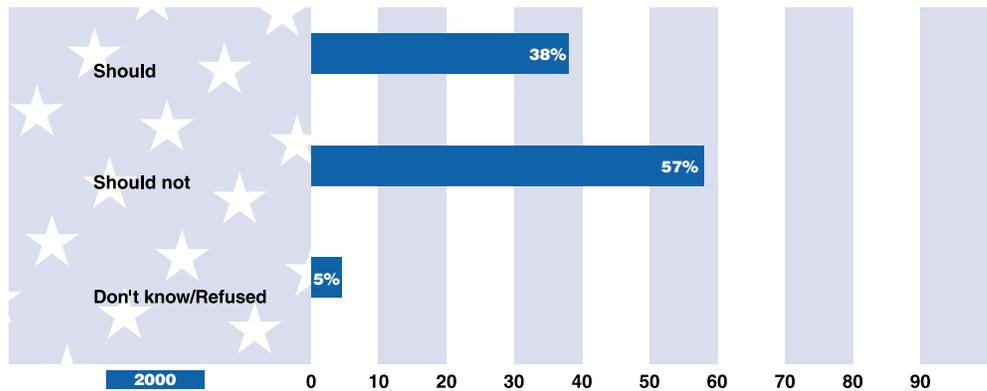
believe the act of contributing money to a political candidate is an expression of free speech and should be protected by the First Amendment.

Despite appreciating the connection between free speech and the funding of campaigns, most survey respondents also favored restrictions on contributions:

- Fifty-three percent agreed that "the government should be able to place restrictions on the amount of money a political candidate can contribute to his or her own election campaign."
- Fifty-seven percent agreed that "the government

2

Do you think the U.S. Constitution should or should not be amended to give government the power to restrict campaign spending?



- **Freedom of the press was far less popular with respondents than freedom of speech or religion,** with 51 percent of those surveyed saying the press in America has too much freedom to do what it wants.

University of Connecticut. The survey is conducted annually.

Among emerging issues:

Campaign Finance Reform

Our survey indicates that a majority of those polled

should be able to place restrictions on the amount of money a private individual can contribute to someone else's election campaign."

- Sixty-eight percent agreed that "the government should be able to place

restrictions on the amount of money a private corporation or a union can contribute to an election campaign.”

While most respondents were supportive of legislation that would curb campaign finance spending, only 38 percent would be in favor of amending the Constitution to give government a right to restrict campaign spending. Clearly, this is a significant societal concern, but most respondents were not willing to change the Constitution to address it.

Freedom of Religion

Freedom of religion may have been the single most important freedom to the Founding Fathers.

Today a majority of Americans clearly are comfortable with this freedom, with 63 percent of survey respondents saying they believe the amount of religious freedom in the United States is “about right.”

However, the number of Americans who believe there is too little religious freedom is increasing. In 1997, 21 percent of those surveyed said there was too little religious freedom. That grew to 26 percent in 1999. In the 2000 survey, 29 percent said there's inadequate religious freedom.

This may be attributable to people who value their own freedom of religion but resent the establishment clause that prevents government-sponsored exercise of religion and prayer in public schools.

We've also seen a steady increase in the number of survey respondents who strongly agree that public school officials should be allowed to lead prayer in schools. In 1997, that figure was 37 percent. By 2000, it had grown to 48 percent.

In addition, a majority of those surveyed this year agreed that there should be greater latitude for other

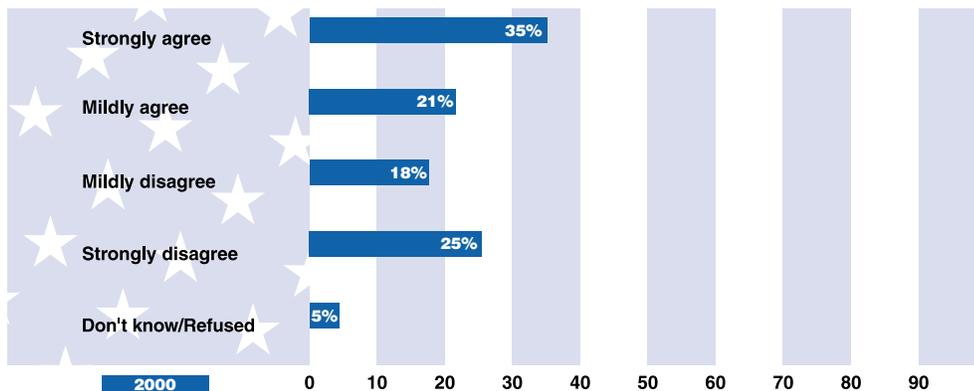
religious activities in public schools:

- Sixty-one percent agreed that “local school officials should be allowed to post the Ten Commandments on the wall of a public school classroom.”
- Sixty-four percent agreed that “students should be allowed to lead prayers over the public address system at public school-sponsored events.”

Finally, 64 percent of those polled agreed that “parents should have the option of sending their children to religious schools instead of public schools using vouchers or credits provided by the federal government.”

One surprise in the new survey was the level of support for using the Bible as a source of historical information. Fifty-six percent of respondents said “a public school teacher should be allowed to use the Bible as a factual text in a history or

A public school teacher should be allowed to use the Bible as a factual text in a history or social studies class.



social studies class,” a response that indicates support for classroom use of the Bible even as it suggests a blurred line between historicity and religious belief.

Media Violence

Most survey respondents saw a correlation between violent content in the news and entertainment media and violence in American society. To varying degrees, respondents blamed television, violent video games and violent lyrics as culprits.

- Eighty-three percent of respondents thought that television violence contributes to violence in real life.
- Seventy-four percent said that violence in video games contributes to violence in real life.

- Seventy-two percent said that violent lyrics in music contribute to violence in society.

Freedom of the Press

The headline-grabbing finding of the “State of the First Amendment Survey 1999” was that 53 percent of Americans felt the press has too much freedom to do what it wants.

The First Amendment Center followed up on the initial finding by convening focus groups, which suggested that the President Clinton/Monica Lewinsky scandal was the driving force behind the high level of dissatisfaction with America’s news media. A follow-up survey in September 1999 indicated that the discontent had abated, leaving just 42 percent of Americans saying

there was too much freedom of the press.

The current survey was conducted in the spring of 2000, at a time when there was extensive coverage of the custody battle over Elian Gonzalez. Once again, the number of survey respondents who felt there was too much freedom in the press had risen, this time to 51 percent.

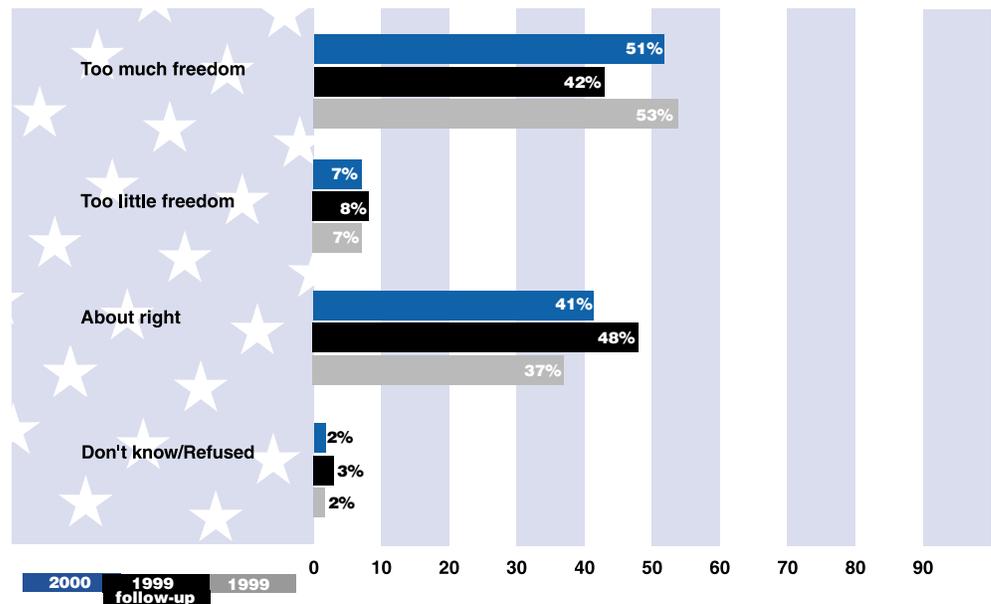
Freedom of Speech on the Internet

As Americans increasingly make use of the Internet, their support for it as a vehicle for free speech grows.

- Seventy-four percent of respondents agreed that “material on the Internet should have the same First Amendment protections as printed material such as books

4

Do you think the press in America has too much freedom to do what it wants, too little freedom to do what it wants, or is the amount of freedom the press has about right?



and newspapers.” This was a substantial increase from 1999, when only 54 percent expressed that view.

- The number of survey respondents with access to the Internet likewise increased significantly (from 56 percent to 68 percent) during the same time period. There appears to be a strong correlation between personal use of the Internet and respect for it as a medium of free expression.

Even so, the kind of troubling speech that inclines Americans to support limits on free expression in the offline world leads them to support online limits as well.

- Fifty-eight percent of survey respondents believed “the government should be able to restrict the posting of information on the Internet about how to make a bomb, even though such information is already available in books.”
- Fifty-eight percent believed that “the government should be able to restrict the posting of sexually explicit materials on the Internet, even though those same materials can be legally published in books and magazines.”

As for access to the Internet in public libraries — another developing area — Americans have conflicting views on that subject too.

A very small percentage of the survey respondents — 11 percent — believed that public libraries should give all visitors full access to the Internet. Fifty-three percent of those responding believed that public libraries should simply block children’s access to potentially offensive sites.

More than one-third of respondents, however, believed that public libraries should block access to potentially offensive Internet sites for all, whether adults or children.

State of the First Amendment

Despite the title of this report, there clearly is no single “state of the First Amendment.” While some freedoms have enthusiastic public support, others are at risk.

Concern about society’s challenges — stemming violence, protecting children and addressing racial intolerance — can undercut support for freedom of expression.

Free speech is widely supported in theory, but

survey results suggest that a significant number of Americans are willing to sacrifice some freedom in order to curb ugly speech.

Americans generally support freedom of the press, but are tempted to limit news-media rights when newscasts and newspapers offend or disappoint.

The ambivalence Americans seem to feel toward their fundamental freedoms is somewhat disappointing, but not surprising. After all, the First Amendment was designed to protect minority viewpoints. By its nature, the American political process — and legislation that targets free expression — are driven by majority vote.

Can we as a nation more fully embrace the First Amendment and not be tempted to chip away at it?

The answer may lie in education. Many Americans acknowledge that they don’t know as much about the First Amendment as they should.

Most respondents to this Year 2000 survey were able to name only a single freedom contained in the First Amendment. Sixty-five percent of those polled said

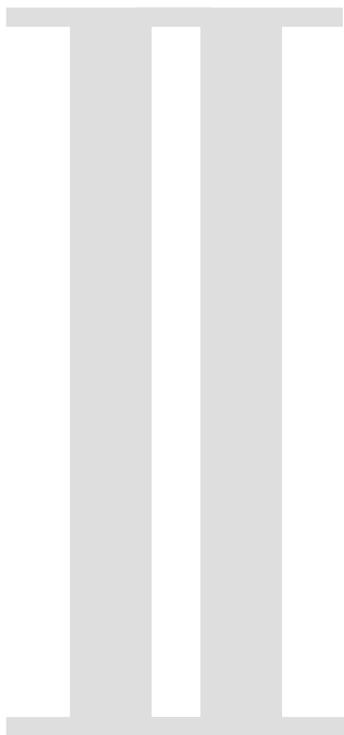
America's schools do only a fair or poor job of teaching students about First Amendment freedoms.

In the end, embracing the First Amendment and all it protects may depend on knowing it more fully.

With knowledge comes perspective, as well as respect and a greater appreciation for the Founding Fathers' greatest gift.

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State of the First Amendment Survey

Weighted Data N=1015

Hello, my name is _____, and I am calling from the University of Connecticut. We are conducting a survey on important issues facing the nation. To determine who I need to speak with, could you please tell me which person in your household, age 18 or older, has had the most recent birthday? (If not respondent, ask to speak with him or her).

9

1. As you may know, the First Amendment is part of the U.S. Constitution. Can you name any of the specific rights that are guaranteed by the First Amendment? (Probe: Are there any others you can name?)

1997 1999 2000

11%	12%	12%	Freedom of the press
49%	44%	60%	Freedom of speech
21%	13%	16%	Freedom of religion
2%	2%	2%	Right to petition
10%	8%	9%	Right of assembly/association
7%	6%	12%	Other
37%	49%	37%	Don't know/Refused

-
2. The First Amendment became part of the U.S. Constitution more than 200 years ago. This is what it says: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." Based on your own feelings about the First Amendment, please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement: The First Amendment goes too far in the rights it guarantees.

1999 2000

16%	10%	Strongly agree
12%	12%	Mildly agree
22%	26%	Mildly disagree
45%	48%	Strongly disagree
5%	5%	Don't know/Refused

10

Rotate Questions 3 through 5.
SPLIT SAMPLE-Questions 3a and 3b

- 3a. Even though the U.S. Constitution guarantees freedom of the press, government has placed some restrictions on it. Overall, do you think Americans have too much press freedom, too little press freedom, or is the amount of press freedom in America about right?

N=516

1999†2000

31%	40%	Too much freedom
17%	14%	Too little freedom
49%	43%	Right amount of freedom
4%	3%	Don't know/Refused

† refers to follow-up survey conducted Sept. 3-13, 1999.

3b. Even though the U.S. Constitution guarantees freedom of the press, government has placed some restrictions on it. Overall, do you think the press in America has too much freedom to do what it wants, too little freedom to do what it wants, or is the amount of freedom the press has about right?

N=499

1997 1999 1999† 2000

38%	53%	42%	51%	Too much freedom
9%	7%	8%	7%	Too little freedom
50%	37%	48%	41%	About right
3%	2%	3%	2%	Don't know/Refused

4. Even though the U.S. Constitution guarantees freedom of speech, government has placed some restrictions on it. Overall, do you think Americans have too much freedom to speak freely, too little freedom to speak freely, or is the amount of freedom to speak freely about right?

1997 1999 2000

10%	12%	11%	Too much freedom
18%	26%	25%	Too little freedom
68%	59%	62%	About right
4%	3%	2%	Don't know/Refused

5. Even though the U.S. Constitution guarantees freedom of religion, government has placed some restrictions on it. Overall, do you think Americans have too much religious freedom, too little religious freedom, or is the amount of religious freedom about right?

1997 1999 2000

6%	8%	5%	Too much freedom
21%	26%	29%	Too little freedom
71%	63%	63%	About right
2%	3%	3%	Don't know/Refused

† refers to follow-up survey conducted Sept. 3-13, 1999.

-
6. Overall, how would you rate the job that the American educational system does in teaching students about First Amendment freedoms — excellent, good, fair, or poor?

1997 2000

4%	3%	Excellent
26%	25%	Good
41%	35%	Fair
22%	30%	Poor
6%	7%	Don't know/Refused

7. To the best of your knowledge, under current law, do Americans have the legal right to burn the American flag as a means of political protest? Yes or no?

1999 2000

33%	36%	Yes
64%	61%	No
3%	4%	Don't know/Refused

12

I am going to read you some ways people might exercise their First Amendment right of free speech. For each, please tell me if you agree or disagree that someone should be allowed to do it. First ...

8. People should be allowed to express unpopular opinions.

1997 1999 2000

68%	58%	69%	Strongly agree
22%	28%	26%	Mildly agree
5%	8%	2%	Mildly disagree
4%	5%	3%	Strongly disagree
1%	1%	*%	Don't know/Refused

*=less than 1%

Rotate Questions 9-13, keeping Questions 12a and 12b together.

9. People should be allowed to say things in public that might be offensive to religious groups.

2000

22%	Strongly agree
24%	Mildly agree
15%	Mildly disagree
38%	Strongly disagree
1%	Don't know/Refused

10. Musicians should be allowed to sing songs with lyrics that others might find offensive.

1997 1999 2000

23%	27%	32%	Strongly agree
28%	29%	27%	Mildly agree
16%	15%	12%	Mildly disagree
31%	26%	28%	Strongly disagree
3%	4%	2%	Don't know/Refused

13

11. People should be allowed to burn or deface the American flag as a political statement.

1997 1999 2000

10%	10%	12%	Strongly agree
10%	10%	13%	Mildly agree
8%	6%	7%	Mildly disagree
70%	74%	67%	Strongly disagree
2%	1%	1%	Don't know/Refused

12a. People should be allowed to say things in public that might be offensive to racial groups.

1997 1999 2000

8%	8%	15%	Strongly agree
15%	13%	17%	Mildly agree
14%	16%	15%	Mildly disagree
61%	62%	52%	Strongly disagree
2%	1%	1%	Don't know/Refused

12b. Would you favor or oppose a law that would make it illegal for people to say things in public that are offensive to racial groups?

2000

36%	Favor
60%	Oppose
4%	Don't know/Refused

14

13. People should be allowed to display in a public place art that has content that might be offensive to others.

1997 1999 2000

20%	17%	22%	Strongly agree
24%	24%	24%	Mildly agree
22%	24%	17%	Mildly disagree
31%	33%	34%	Strongly disagree
4%	2%	4%	Don't know/Refused

Rotate Questions 14a-19, keeping Questions 14a-17 together and Questions 18 and 19 together.

I'm going to read you some ways that the government might play a role in political campaigns. For each, indicate whether you agree or disagree that the government should be able to do it. First ...

Randomize Questions 14a-14c.

14a. The government should be able to place restrictions on the amount of money a political candidate can contribute to his or her own election campaign.

2000

36%	Strongly agree
17%	Mildly agree
18%	Mildly disagree
26%	Strongly disagree
3%	Don't know/Refused

15

14b. The government should be able to place restrictions on the amount of money a private individual can contribute to *someone else's* election campaign.

2000

40%	Strongly agree
17%	Mildly agree
17%	Mildly disagree
24%	Strongly disagree
2%	Don't know/Refused

14c. The government should be able to place restrictions on the amount of money a private corporation or a union can contribute to an election campaign.

2000

- 52% Strongly agree
- 16% Mildly agree
- 12% Mildly disagree
- 18% Strongly disagree
- 2% Don't know/Refused

15. Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement: Contributing money to a political candidate is an expression of free speech that should be protected by the Constitution.

2000

- 33% Strongly agree
- 32% Mildly agree
- 12% Mildly disagree
- 19% Strongly disagree
- 3% Don't know/Refused

16. Some people feel that the U.S. Constitution should be amended to give government the power to restrict campaign spending. Others say that the U.S. Constitution should not be amended to specifically give government the power to restrict campaign spending. Do you think the U.S. Constitution should or should not be amended to give government the power to restrict campaign spending?

2000

- 38% Should >
Go to Question 17
- 57% Should not >
Go to Question 18
- 5% Don't know/Refused >
Go to Question 18

17. If an amendment allowing government to restrict election campaign spending were approved, it would be the first time any of the freedoms in the First Amendment has been amended in over 200 years. Knowing this, would you still support an amendment to allow government to restrict campaign spending?
 N=380

2000

85% Yes
 12% No
 3% Don't know/Refused

18. Some people feel that the U.S. Constitution should be amended to make it illegal to burn or desecrate the American flag as a form of political dissent. Others say that the U.S. Constitution should not be amended to specifically prohibit flag burning or desecration. Do you think the U.S. Constitution should or should not be amended to prohibit burning or desecrating the American flag?

17

1997 1999 2000

49% 48% 51% Should not >
 Go to Question 20
 49% 51% 46% Should
 2% 1% 3% Don't know/Refused >
 Go to Question 20

19. [If "should":] If an amendment prohibiting burning or desecrating the flag were approved, it would be the first time any of the freedoms in the First Amendment have been amended in over 200 years. Knowing this, would you still support an amendment to prohibit burning or desecrating the flag?
 N=437

1997 1999 2000

88% 90% 87% Yes
 9% 8% 12% No
 3% 2% 1% Don't know/Refused

20. Please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statement: News organizations should be allowed to report or publish what they think is appropriate to report.

1999 2000

31%	38%	Strongly agree
35%	29%	Mildly agree
14%	10%	Mildly disagree
16%	20%	Strongly disagree
4%	3%	Don't know/Refused

I'm going to read you some ways that freedom of the press may be exercised. For each, please tell me if you agree or disagree that the press should be allowed to do it. First ...

Randomize Questions 21 through 29, keeping Questions 26 and 27 linked.

18

21. Newspapers should be allowed to publish freely without government approval of a story.

1997 1999 2000

56%	38%	54%	Strongly agree
24%	27%	22%	Mildly agree
11%	14%	9%	Mildly disagree
6%	18%	11%	Strongly disagree
3%	3%	3%	Don't know/Refused

22. Journalists should be allowed to keep a news source confidential.

1997 1999 2000

58%	48%	52%	Strongly agree
27%	31%	25%	Mildly agree
6%	10%	8%	Mildly disagree
6%	9%	10%	Strongly disagree
2%	3%	5%	Don't know/Refused

23. Broadcasters should be allowed to televise any courtroom trial they want to.¹

1997 1999 2000

28%	34%	22%	Strongly agree
23%	33%	16%	Mildly agree
9%	13%	21%	Mildly disagree
25%	17%	39%	Strongly disagree
4%	3%	2%	Don't know/Refused

24. Newspapers should be allowed to endorse candidates for public office.

1999[†]2000

29%	27%	Strongly agree
28%	27%	Mildly agree
26%	28%	Strongly disagree
14%	15%	Mildly disagree
3%	3%	Don't know/Refused

19

25. Newspapers should be allowed to criticize public officials.

1999[†]2000

44%	52%	Strongly agree
28%	25%	Mildly agree
11%	10%	Mildly disagree
16%	13%	Strongly disagree
1%	1%	Don't know/Refused

¹Statement worded differently in 1997, 1999 surveys, i.e., "Broadcasters should be allowed to televise courtroom trials."

[†]refers to follow-up survey conducted Sept. 3-13, 1999.

26. Television networks should be allowed to project winners of an election while people are still voting.

1997 1999 2000

15%	11%	12%	Strongly agree
16%	18%	18%	Mildly agree
17%	19%	17%	Mildly disagree
51%	51%	53%	Strongly disagree
1%	1%	1%	Don't know/Refused

27. If a news report projected the winner of an election while people were still voting, how do you think this would affect people who had not yet voted? Do you think they would be more likely to vote, less likely to vote, or do you think it would not affect their decision to vote?

2000

14%	More likely
64%	Less likely
18%	No effect
5%	Don't know/Refused

20

28. High school students should be allowed to report on controversial issues in their student newspapers without approval of school authorities.

1997 1999 2000

24%	19%	26%	Strongly agree
21%	18%	17%	Mildly agree
23%	27%	22%	Mildly disagree
29%	33%	33%	Strongly disagree
3%	3%	3%	Don't know/Refused

29. Broadcasters should be allowed to televise the proceedings of the U.S. Supreme Court.

1997 2000

44%	48%	Strongly agree
29%	25%	Mildly agree
11%	10%	Mildly disagree
12%	13%	Strongly disagree
3%	4%	Don't know/Refused

30. Teachers or other public school officials should be allowed to lead prayers in school.

1997 1999 2000

37%	44%	48%	Strongly agree
20%	21%	17%	Mildly agree
15%	15%	13%	Mildly disagree
25%	18%	19%	Strongly disagree
2%	2%	2%	Don't know/Refused

21

31. Do you feel that the freedom to worship as one chooses ... applies to all religious groups regardless of how extreme their beliefs are, or was never meant to apply to religious groups that most people would consider extreme or fringe? (Rotate responses.)

1997 2000

69%	72%	Applies to all religious groups regardless of how extreme their beliefs are
24%	19%	Was never meant to apply to religious groups that the majority of the people consider extreme or on the fringe
2%	3%	Neither
5%	6%	Don't know/Refused

Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

32. It's OK for a prayer to be said at a high school graduation if a majority of the graduating class favors it.

1997 2000

62%	62%	Strongly agree
19%	19%	Mildly agree
9%	8%	Mildly disagree
9%	10%	Strongly disagree
2%	1%	Don't know/Refused

33. Students should be allowed to lead prayers over the public address system at public school-sponsored events such as football games.

2000

44%	Strongly agree
20%	Mildly agree
15%	Mildly disagree
20%	Strongly disagree
2%	Don't know/Refused

22

Rotate Questions 34 and 35.

Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

34. Local school officials should be allowed to post the Ten Commandments on the wall of a public school classroom.

2000

43%	Strongly agree
18%	Mildly agree
15%	Mildly disagree
21%	Strongly disagree
2%	Don't know/Refused

35. Parents should have the option of sending their children to religious schools instead of public schools using “vouchers” or “credits” provided by the federal government that would pay for some or all of the costs.

2000

43%	Strongly agree
21%	Mildly agree
9%	Mildly disagree
25%	Strongly disagree
3%	Don't know/Refused

I'm now going to read you some ways that the Bible might be used in public school classrooms. For each, please tell me if you agree or disagree that a public school teacher should be allowed to use the Bible in this way. First ...

Rotate Questions 36a-36c.

23

36a. A public school teacher should be allowed to use the Bible as a form of literature in an English class.

2000

48%	Strongly agree
27%	Mildly agree
12%	Mildly disagree
12%	Strongly disagree
1%	Don't know/Refused

36b. A public school teacher should be allowed to use the Bible as a text in a comparative religion class.

2000

61%	Strongly agree
24%	Mildly agree
6%	Mildly disagree
9%	Strongly disagree
1%	Don't know/Refused

36c. A public school teacher should be allowed to use the Bible as a factual text in a history or social studies class.

2000

35%	Strongly agree
21%	Mildly agree
18%	Mildly disagree
25%	Strongly disagree
2%	Don't know/Refused

37. Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement: Any group that wants to should be allowed to hold a rally for a cause or issue even if it may be offensive to others in the community.

1997 1999 2000

38%	30%	34%	Strongly agree
34%	32%	32%	Mildly agree
10%	16%	12%	Mildly disagree
15%	20%	19%	Strongly disagree
3%	3%	4%	Don't know/Refused

38. As you may know, courts have traditionally given broad First Amendment protections to books and newspapers that contain material that may be offensive to some people. Do you agree or disagree that material on the Internet should have the same First Amendment protections as printed material such as books and newspapers?

1997 1999 2000

30%	31%	50%	Strongly agree
26%	33%	24%	Mildly agree
15%	17%	8%	Mildly disagree
23%	14%	13%	Strongly disagree
5%	6%	5%	Don't know/Refused

Now I'm going to read you a series of ways in which the government might regulate content on the Internet. For each, please tell me whether you agree or disagree that the government should be able to do it. First ... (Rotate Questions 39-41.)

39. The government should be able to restrict the posting of sexually explicit materials on the Internet, even though those same materials can be legally published in books and magazines.

2000

44%	Strongly agree
14%	Mildly agree
15%	Mildly disagree
24%	Strongly disagree
2%	Don't know/Refused

40. The government should be able to restrict speech on the Internet that might be considered offensive to racial groups, even though that same type of speech can be legally published in books and newspapers.

25

2000

27%	Strongly agree
15%	Mildly agree
22%	Mildly disagree
32%	Strongly disagree
4%	Don't know/Refused

41. The government should be able to restrict the posting of information on the Internet about how to make a bomb, even though such information is already available in books.

2000

47% Strongly agree
11% Mildly agree
15% Mildly disagree
24% Strongly disagree
3% Don't know/Refused

42. As you may know, the television industry voluntarily assigns content ratings to entertainment programs shown on TV. Do you think the federal government should or should not be involved in rating entertainment programs shown on TV?

1999 2000

40% 43% Should not
57% 54% Should
3% 3% Don't know/Refused

43. Do you use television ratings to make decisions about viewing for you and your family?

2000

40% Yes
59% No
1% Don't know/Refused

-
44. There has been a lot of talk about rating or regulating what is posted on the Internet. Do you think the government has a role to play in developing a system to rate Internet material or do you think government should not be involved?

1999 2000

58%	56%	Government should be involved
37%	39%	Government should not be involved
4%	5%	Don't know/Refused

45. As you may know, most public libraries have computers that visitors may use to access information on the Internet. I'm going to read you three statements that describe different policies that public libraries might adopt regarding access to Internet sites that contain material that might offend some people. Please tell me which statement comes closest to your own opinion. (Flip statements so half are read A to C and half are read C to A.)

27

2000

34%	A) Public libraries should block access to potentially offensive Internet sites on all computers.
53%	B) Public libraries should block access to potentially offensive Internet sites only on computers used by children.
11%	C) Public library users should have access to all Internet sites.
2%	Don't know/Refused

Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

46. Tabloid newspapers such as *The Star* and the *National Enquirer* should have the same freedom to publish what they want as other newspapers such as *The New York Times*, and the *Wall Street Journal*.

1997 1999 2000

43%	36%	47%	Strongly agree
33%	35%	26%	Mildly agree
8%	8%	6%	Mildly disagree
14%	19%	18%	Strongly disagree
2%	2%	3%	Don't know/Refused

47. Television shows such as the Jerry Springer show and the Jenny Jones show should have the same freedom to air what they want as "ABC News with Peter Jennings" or "60 Minutes."²

1999 2000

30%	43%	Strongly agree
30%	27%	Mildly agree
11%	7%	Mildly disagree
26%	20%	Strongly disagree
3%	4%	Don't know/Refused

Randomize 48a through 48c.

²Question as worded in 1999 survey did not include reference to "60 Minutes."

48a. How much, if at all, do you think violence on television contributes to violence in real life? Does television violence contribute a great deal, somewhat, not very much or not at all to violence in real life?

2000

44%	A great deal
39%	Somewhat
11%	Not very much
5%	Not at all
1%	Don't know/Refused

48b. How much, if at all, do you think violence in video games contributes to violence in real life? Does video game violence contribute a great deal, somewhat, not very much or not at all to violence in real life?

2000

37%	A great deal
37%	Somewhat
16%	Not very much
7%	Not at all
3%	Don't know/Refused

29

48c. How much, if at all, do you think violent lyrics in music contribute to violence in real life? Do violent lyrics in music contribute a great deal, somewhat, not very much or not at all to violence in real life?

2000

32%	A great deal
40%	Somewhat
19%	Not very much
8%	Not at all
2%	Don't know/Refused

48d. Some people think that [insert statement], while others think that [insert statement]. Which one of these statements do you agree with more? (Rotate A and B.)

A) Individuals who are exposed to lots of media violence become less sensitive to violence in real life.

B) Exposure to media violence has little or no effect on an individual's sensitivity to real violence.

(Probe: "Do you agree strongly or somewhat with this statement?")

2000

31%	Strongly agree A
17%	Mildly agree A
28%	Strongly agree B
20%	Mildly agree B
2%	Neither
3%	Don't know/Refused

30

49. Do you currently have access to the Internet at work, school, or home?

1999 2000

56%	68%	Yes
44%	32%	No
0%	*%	Don't know/Refused

*=less than 1%

Now I'd just like to ask a few questions for classification purposes only ...

50. In what year were you born?

19% 18-29 years old
36% 30-44 years old
23% 45-59 years old
21% 60 years old +

51. What was the last grade of school you completed?
Grade school or less, some high school, high school,
some college, college grad, post-graduate.

2% Grade school or less
9% Some high school
38% High school grad
29% Some college
15% College graduate
8% Post-graduate
*% Don't know/Refused

31

*=less than 1%

52. Are you White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, or something else?

82% White
8% Black
4% Hispanic
1% Asian
1% Bi-racial (volunteered)
3% Other
1% Don't know/Refused

53. For classification purposes only, is the total yearly income of all the members of your family now living at home \$40,000 or more, or would it be less than \$40,000?

38% Less than \$40,000
55% \$40,000 or more
8% Don't know/Refused

53a. And is that

4% Under \$10,000
9% \$10 K to less than \$20 K
13% \$20 K to less than \$30 K
10% \$30 K to less than \$40K
2% Don't know/Refused

32

53b. And is that . . .

14% \$40 K to less than \$50 K
18% \$50 K to less than \$75 K
9% \$75 K to less than \$100 K
9% \$100 K or more
4% Don't know/Refused

54. Are you Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, or some other religion?

25% Catholic
39% Protestant
2% Jewish
28% Other/No religion
7% Don't know/Refused

55. Would you describe yourself as either a fundamentalist or evangelical Christian, or would you not describe yourself that way?

N=928

20%	Fundamentalist/evangelical
69%	Neither
12%	Don't know/Refused

56. In politics today, are you a Democrat, a Republican, an Independent or what?

35%	Democrat
26%	Republican
26%	Independent
9%	No preference (volunteered)
2%	Other (volunteered)
2%	Don't know/Refused

33

57. Do you have any children under the age of 18?

38%	Yes
62%	No

58a. Do you have any children under the age of 12?

29%	Yes
71%	No

58b. Do you have any children under the age of 6?

17%	Yes
83%	No

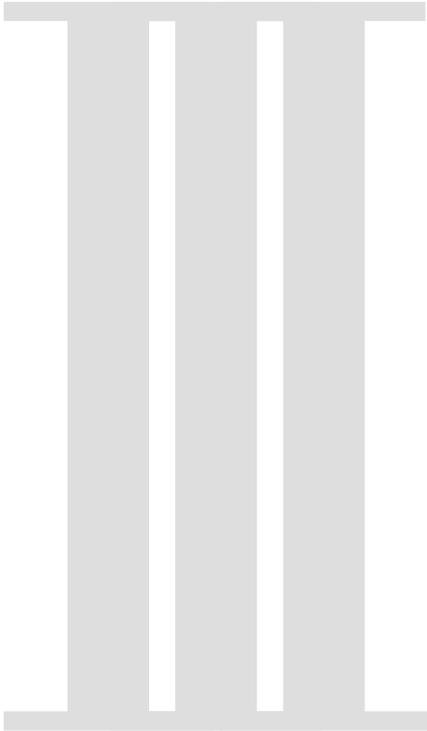
59. What state do you live in?

60. Respondent's sex (do not ask):

Male 48%

Female 52%

Thank you very much for your time. You have been very helpful, and we appreciate your cooperation.



Methodology

The State of the First Amendment 2000 survey was conducted for The First Amendment Center by the Center for Survey Research and Analysis at the University of Connecticut. Kenneth A. Paulson, executive director of the First Amendment Center, provided overall direction for the project. Dr. Lawrence T. McGill of the First Amendment Center supervised the development of the questionnaire, aided by input from Paul K. McMasters, First Amendment ombudsman for The Freedom Forum, and Charles C. Haynes, senior scholar at the First Amendment Center.

At the University of Connecticut, Professor Ken Dautrich directed the project. Professor David Yalof, Jennifer Dineen and Erin St. Onge also contributed to the development of the questionnaire and to various aspects of project management.

Telephone questionnaires were pre-tested with 30 respondents. The pre-test was used to ensure that questions were understood by respondents and response categories were appropriate.

Sample Design

The University of Connecticut follows procedures in sampling and data processing that are designed to minimize error in the results. For the sampling procedure, we utilized a variation of random-digit dialing. Working residential “blocks” were identified with the aid of published directories. These exchanges were chosen in a modified stratified procedure based on the proportion of the theoretical universe residing in the geographic area covered by each published directory. Thus, in general, if 10% of the universe lives in the area covered by a directory, 10% of the exchanges will be chosen from that area.

The universe for the First Amendment project was the adult non-institutionalized population of the contiguous 48 states who were 18 years of age and older. The

geographic distribution in sampling was based on estimates of the distribution derived from the census figures for towns.

Once working blocks were identified, one telephone number was generated at random for each block. A household was given five distinct opportunities to be contacted before a substitution was made for it.

Once it had been determined that the household did, in fact, contain an eligible respondent, a random selection — unbiased by age or sex among the eligible respondents — was made. If that person was not the one who answered the telephone, an eligible respondent was called to the phone.

“Household” was defined as a dwelling where at least one adult 18 years of age resided. Institutions such as college dormitories, prisons and the like were omitted.

Fieldwork

36

All interviewing for this project was conducted at the University of Connecticut's telephone center. Interviewing was conducted by telephone from April 13 - 26, 2000, using a Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) system. The CATI system utilizes computerized questionnaires, thereby reducing the amount of human error in the survey process.

The telephone interviews took place in the evenings on weekdays, on Saturday mornings and afternoons and on Sunday afternoons and evenings. This schedule avoided the potential for bias caused by selecting people who were at home only at certain times. If a given telephone number did not result in an interview — for whatever reason — a substitution was made for it from within the same working block (which functioned as a single member “cluster.”) This meant that one person's not being at home, for example, did not keep his or her cluster from coming into the survey.

Sampling Error

A total of 1,015 interviews were conducted with a national scientific sample of adults 18 years of age or older. Sampling error for a sample of this size is plus or

minus 3 percentage points at the 95% level of confidence. Sampling error for subgroups (e.g., men, women, etc.) is larger.

The size of the sampling error depends largely on the number of interviews — the more interviews, the smaller the sampling error. But it also varies in relation to the results obtained on each question asked. In other words, the sampling error for survey results that are closer to 50% is slightly larger than the sampling error for survey results closer to 0% or 100%.

The following table may be used in estimating the sampling error of any percentage in the report. The computed allowances have taken into account the effect of the sample design upon sampling error. They may be interpreted as indicating the range (plus or minus the figure shown) within which the results of repeated sampling in the same time period could be expected to vary 95% of the time, assuming the same sampling procedure, the same interviewers and the same questionnaire were used.

The table is used in the following manner: If a reported percentage is 33% for a group that included 1,000 respondents, go first to the row headed "PERCENTAGES NEAR 30" and go across to the column headed "1000." The number at this point is 4. This means that the 33% figure obtained in the sample is subject to a sampling error of plus or minus 4 points. Another way of saying it is that, very likely (95 times out of 100), the average result of repeated sampling would be somewhere between 29% and 37%, with the most likely figure being 33%.

SAMPLE SIZE		1000	750	600	400	200	100
PERCENTAGES NEAR	10	2	3	3	4	5	7
	20	3	4	4	5	7	9
	30	4	4	4	6	8	10
	40	4	4	5	6	8	11
	50	4	4	5	6	8	11
	60	4	4	5	6	8	11
	70	4	4	4	6	8	10
	80	3	4	4	5	7	9
	90	2	3	3	4	5	7

Over-Time Comparisons

Some of the questions in this survey are repeated from questions administered in the 1997 and 1999 State of the First Amendment studies. These serve as time-line comparisons to track changes in opinion.

The 1997 State of the First Amendment survey was conducted between July 17 and Aug. 1, 1997. The 1999 State of the First Amendment survey was conducted between Feb. 26 and March 24, 1999. A short follow-up survey to the 1999 State of the First Amendment survey (1999f) was conducted September 3-13, 1999.

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The First Amendment Center works to preserve and protect First Amendment freedoms through information and education. The center serves as a forum for the study and exploration of free expression issues, including freedom of speech, of the press and of religion, the right to assemble and to petition the government. The center, with offices at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tenn., and in New York City and Arlington, Va., is an operating program of The Freedom Forum and is affiliated with the Newseum, The Freedom Forum's interactive museum of news. The Freedom Forum is a nonpartisan, international foundation dedicated to free press, free speech and free spirit for all people.



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