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Strengthening Wisconsin.*

PROFS Statement on Assembly Joint Resolution 32 Declaring April to be Freedom of Expression Month

On Tuesday, 6 April 2021, State Representative Dave Murphy (R-Greenville) and State Senator André Jacque (R-De Pere) proposed Assembly Joint Resolution 32, declaring April to be Freedom of Expression Month. PROFS is committed to the principles of free expression as enshrined in the Wisconsin Board of Regents in defense of Professor Richard Ely in 1894, in the UW-Madison's statements of faculty rights and responsibilities, in the First Amendment to the US Constitution and in Article I of the Wisconsin Constitution.

We laud the spirit of the Joint Resolution as outlined in its second "whereas" clause, that freedom of expression "is a cornerstone of liberty, ensuring that public debate is necessary for any healthy republic," which is consistent with the University of Wisconsin Regents statement on Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression, that all members of the university community should have "the widest possible latitude to explore ideas and to speak, write, listen, challenge and learn" (Commitment to Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression, UW System Regent Policy Document 4-21, 2017).

Unfortunately, much of the Joint Resolution's language doesn't so much celebrate the protections of expression granted by our country's founding documents, and as promulgated by the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the state's other institutions of higher education, as it does constitute an unfortunate attack on the state's colleges and universities.

So while PROFS supports the naming of April as "Free Expression Month" in the State of Wisconsin, we cannot support the mean-spiritedness of the Resolution itself.

April 12, 2021