Minuteman files complaint for allegedly stolen newspapers

Matt Rocheleau, Collegian Staff

Published: Monday, April 6, 2009
Updated: Tuesday, April 7, 2009

SHARE PRINT

S.P. Sullivan / Collegian

The Minuteman newspaper is submitting a complaint through the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) to the University of Massachusetts and the UMass Police Department (UMPD) asking them to hold students who allegedly stole extra copies of their newspaper last week.

During the "Rally for Free Speech" hosted by the Republican Club outside the Student Union on Wednesday, around 100 copies of The Minuteman were reportedly taken from a newspaper distributor's hands and torn up by students protesting the rally.

Brad DeFlumeri, co-managing editor of The Minuteman, a monthly, student-run conservative newspaper printed by a group called The Silent Majority, said obstructing the circulation or distribution of a newspaper is a violation of First Amendment rights.

"Apparently the University told The Minuteman that since the papers are free, people can take as many as they like and do with them what they like," said director of FIRE's Individual Rights Defense Program, Adam Kissel who described the protesters' actions as theft.

On the top of the The Minuteman's front page was printed, "first copy, free; each additional copy, $3.00." This was done to prevent copies from being removed from the stands by potential protesters, including members of the UMass Coalition Against Hate (CAH), said DeFlumeri.

However, Charles T. Peterson, a member of CAH and the UMass International Socialist Organization (ISO), said, "they [The Minuteman staff] put out big stacks of the newspapers rather haphazardly, and they don't say anywhere that they're selling them."

University spokesman Ed Blaguszewski said a police report was filed and officials are looking into the incident.

The Minuteman distributes more than 10,000 copies each month, and the latest issue raised claims of libel, which DeFlumeri said are unfounded.

According to DeFlumeri, the controversy is centered around financial information the newspaper printed in its April edition about a group called Student Bridges, a creation of the Student Government Association (SGA). DeFlumeri said the information in question was obtained through the Freedom of Information Act.

Student Bridges declined to comment on the matter, said group member Ben Thompson.

UMPD Detective Lisa Kidwell was reportedly at the scene, but she was not available for comment prior to publication.

The Minuteman's complaint filed through FIRE comes less than one month after the UMass Republican Club filed a similar First Amendment-related grievance seeking reimbursement from the campus' administration for a speech canceled several weeks ago due to disruptive protests.

With the help of the FIRE, the club sent a letter to Chancellor Robert Holub on March 24, requesting that UMass return the $444.52 the club was charged by the University for three additional police officers, who were called due to a large number of protesters at the event.

On March 11, conservative pundit Don Feder, a former columnist for the Boston Herald and editorial director of sports radio WEEI, was scheduled to give a lecture – hosted by the Republican Club – on hate crime legislation. However, Feder's speech, which was supposed to last about an hour and a half, was ended early after he was constantly interrupted during the first 15 minutes of his talk.

Kissel said the University's decision to charge the club after the speech was disrupted by protesters and subsequently canceled is a violation of First Amendment rights and that charging the club for extra security is unconstitutional.

"It could be that the administration didn't know [they were violating the club's rights] or it could be they did and took advantage of the Republican Club," he said.

Peterson, who protested with other members of CAH at Feder's speech, said the Republican Club should not be reimbursed.

Most Commented | Most Popular

Mount Holyoke offers new pre-orientation for white students 9 comments

Forum raises concerns about frequent Hispanic stereotypes

Amherst enforces 4 person room occupancy bylaw 3 comments

Rewriting Dean's Book 2 comments

New online tool for UMass course registration 1 comment

Free speech rallies like a villain, and purpose 2 comments

You can't shut us up

Amherst enforces 4 person room occupancy bylaw

Minuteman files complaint for allegedly stolen newspapers

Free speech rallies like a villain, and purpose

Paying for fool's gold

INTERESTED IN GETTING BUSINESS EXPERIENCE?
APPLICATIONS DUE WED. APRIL 8 BY 5 P.M.

THE COLLEGIAN IS ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR THE POSITION OF BUSINESS MANAGER FOR THE 2009-2010 SCHOOL YEAR.

CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD THE APPLICATION.

LOOKING FOR A PLACE TO LIVE?

KAMINS
SPECIALIZING IN HOUSE AND APARTMENT RENTALS
PRESIDENTIAL APTS
COLONIAL VILLAGE APTS
PERRY APTS
177 N. PLEASANT ST.
COLLEGE INN APTS
LANTERN COURT APTS
MILL HOLLOW
CRESTVIEW APTS.
55 S. PLEASANT ST. 253-2515 AMHERST

LARGEST SELECTION OF APARTMENTS IN TOWN

"Don Feder put down his microphone and decided not to continue his speech," said Peterson. "It seems to me that [the Republican Club] went out of their way to get a lot of people there, and they succeeded. So they should be held responsible."

A letter sent from FIRE to the chancellor gives UMass until April 14 to respond.

"We have received that letter, and we're in process of reviewing the matter," said Blaguszewski.

After the April 14 deadline, DeFlumeri, who is also the vice president of the Republican Club, said that if the group has not heard from the University, they are prepared to file a federal lawsuit against UMass for the event's entire cost of around $3,500. The price tag includes the cost for renting the room where the speech was held, advertisement, security, fliers and the money paid to bring Feder to campus.

For now, Kissel said, the club and FIRE are being patient and, "want the University to do the right thing."

Later this week, DeFlumeri said the club will meet with the dean of students to go over the student code of conduct and ensure that future guest lectures are not disrupted by protesters again.

Reporting for this story was done in conjunction with The Daily Hampshire Gazette, where Matt Rocheleau is a contributing writer.

He can be reached at mrochele@dailycollegian.com.

Comments

1 comments

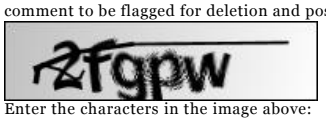
Your name Mon Apr 6 2009 23:20

For real? Give up, Republican Club. Stop trying to make mountains out of molehills.

Add comment

Your name

☐ **I am not posting spam.** I understand posting spam or other comments that are unrelated to this article will cause my comment to be flagged for deletion and possibly cause my IP address to be permanently banned from this server.



Enter the characters in the image above:

Submit

Collegian Advertisers

Textbooks Jobs Dominos Kamins Real Estate

College Publisher powered by mtvUand MTV Networks