

State of Michigan LAW DAY 2008 Essay Contest
"The Rule of Law: Foundation for Communities of Opportunity and Equity"

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Suppose that a high school wants to protect its students from inappropriate internet material. Should a high school library be allowed to install filters on their computers to restrict internet access?

A high school library should be allowed to install filters on their computers to restrict internet access. The government should protect the minor students from inappropriate sites and information available on the Internet.

In United States v. American Library Association, 539 U.S. 194 (2003), the United States Supreme Court agreed that Congress has the authority to require libraries to censor content in order to receive federal funding. Censoring Internet content does not violate the First Amendment right to Free Speech. The Supreme Court Justices, for the most part, agreed that the reason for installing filters was to protect children from inappropriate material. The Court ruled that libraries could have filters censoring content because the purpose of a library is to promote learning and research; it is not a public forum. The restrictions allowed for in a filter are for protection, not to prohibit obtaining the information.

Public high schools receive Federal funding; therefore, the government should be allowed to protect the students and put filters on their computers. The government has the right to act as a parent and protect those who cannot protect themselves. This is known as *parens patriae*. The right of the government to act as a parent in this situation is the concept of *of parens patriae*. This means the government has the right. The students are minors and the government has to watch out for those that cannot protect themselves.

The Core Democratic value of common good requires that individual citizens have the commitment and motivation to promote welfare of the community and to work together with other members for the greater benefit of all. With the common good, the government can act to help and protect minors so everyone can benefit.

The First Amendment of the United States Constitution guarantees its citizens the right to free expression. This freedom does not mean that you have the right to speak anything you want at anytime. One must consider the time, place, and manner of the information being expressed. A high school librarian would not be selecting books that contain inappropriate information or material. Therefore a high school student should not be given access to information that is morally inappropriate on the Internet. The purposes of the filters are to keep minors safe from information that is unsuitable. They are not designed to take away information from the students' right of freedom of expression, but designed to protect them and keep them safe.

A high school library should be allowed to install filters on their computers to restrict internet access. Without filters in a high school library, minors could be influenced with information that is not morally suitable for the ages of the students. Our country can help to strengthen the moral values of our students by cautiously monitoring available information access at our high school libraries.