

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

**Hailee Ryann Mika ~ Second Place ~ Eighth Grade**  
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**Teacher – Mr. Joe Willey**

*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?*

My position regarding freedom of speech on the internet, is that high school libraries should put filters on their computers to restrict internet access. In doing so, school libraries can prevent students from viewing images that may be too graphic and inappropriate. A school is a learning facility used to get an education. Websites that contain lewd information or pictures do not enhance education. In fact, these websites may be harmful to students and could promote harmful behavior.

The case United States v. American Library Association, 539 U.S. 194 (2003) involves freedom of speech and the right to express oneself. The U.S. Supreme Court agreed with the position in this case, of placing filters on computers. In order for public libraries to keep receiving federal assistance to provide patrons with internet access, the Childrens Internet Protection Act (CIPA), enacted in 2000, required public libraries to install software filters on their computers to prevent children from viewing graphic and obscene material on the internet. Although libraries, patrons, and website publishers were against the installation of such software to block obscene or pornographic images, the Supreme Court disagreed.

Historically, society has put limits on freedom of speech that we find obscene, offensive, and violent. Over the years, each generation has come to associate or define the meaning of what is obscene, offensive, or violent, differently. One such instance is the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), a known White Supremacist hate group. Years ago the KKK was somewhat tolerated, or at least society did not pay much attention to their activities. Today, however, people do not accept or tolerate the KKK and what it symbolizes. For example, in December 1999, eighteen KKK members stood in silent protest in Manhattan, surrounded by thousands of protestors. Police had to quickly remove the Klan members to safety forty-five minutes before the scheduled end of their rally because a series of clashes broke out between the two groups.

More recently, Don Imus, a radio host, was also not tolerated by society when he used derogatory remarks against Rutgers womens basketball team consisting mostly of African Americans. His remarks were considered too offensive, and the public outcry was so great that Mr. Imus was fired from his job. These two examples show, as with the United States v. American Library Association case, that Americans will vigorously defend their right to freedom of speech, but not at the cost of enduring offensive behavior, actions or words.

I believe that a school is a place for learning and enhancing education. By having schools provide internet access for students, they are opening up a variety of learning techniques to help us in the future. By placing filters on a school's internet system they are keeping the students safe from viewing harmful material; therefore, I agree with the courts' decision in United States v. American Library Association and the CIPA that filtering systems do not violate our freedom of speech or freedom of expression.