



ACLU of WI Applauds Milwaukee City Attorney for Protecting PETA's First Amendment Rights

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MILWAUKEE, WI – The following statement may be attributed to ACLU of Wisconsin Executive Director Chris Ahmuty.

"The People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals staged a provocative protest at a meat production plant in the Menomonee River Valley this afternoon. The ACLU is pleased that City Attorney Grant Langley did not cave in to pressure from Alderman Bob Donovan's attempts to squelch the demonstration. As the City Attorney correctly observed, the government may impose reasonable limits on the time, place and manner of protests, but may not prohibit them because of their content. In this case, the protesters posed as cuts of meat on platters, with fake blood on their bodies.

"While people may disagree with PETA's message and their sometimes controversial tactics, the First Amendment clearly protects just this sort of expressive activity. As the Supreme Court said in *United States v. Eichman*, even words and expressive conduct that are 'deeply offensive to many' are nonetheless protected by the First Amendment. Indeed, as the Court said more than 60 years ago in *Terminiello v. Chicago*, the 'function of free speech under our system of government is to invite dispute. It may indeed best serve its high purpose when it induces a condition of unrest, creates dissatisfaction with conditions as they are, or even stirs people to anger. Speech is often provocative and challenging. It may strike at prejudices and preconceptions and have profound unsettling effects. . . . [T]he alternative would lead to standardization of ideas either by legislatures, courts, or dominant political or community groups.'

"Alderman Donovan has a right to express his disagreement with PETA and their methods, and he certainly doesn't have to watch their protest if he finds it unpleasant, but he doesn't have a right to trample on the Constitution."

The ACLU of Wisconsin has approximately 7,000 members who support its efforts to defend the civil liberties and civil rights of all Wisconsin residents. For more on the work of the ACLU of Wisconsin, visit our [webpage](#). You can also get news and opinion on civil liberties in Wisconsin on our [Cap City Liberty blog](#). Find us on [Facebook and Twitter at ACLUMadison and ACLUofWisconsin](#).

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