



NICOLE WHITTEN
Political Science

WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF CIVIL DISCOURSE AND FREE SPEECH?

The heart of democracy in the United States lies with the document that outlines our freedoms and liberties: The Constitution. In the formation of the United States, the concrete foundation was laid with this document. The very core of this country is based on those amendments, with an emphasis on the first 10 of the Constitution: The Bill of Rights. In this, it is clearly stipulated that the government is not to infringe on certain unalienable rights. That is, freedom of speech, religion, press, petition, etc. Freedom speech entitled the right to criticize the government, without fear of backlash or imprisonment, but in the 21st century, freedom of speech, and by extent, civil discourse, goes deeper than that.

Democracy is, at its core, by the people, for the people, and of the people. When the people do not actively participate in its government, it crumbles. A democracy cannot thrive without the expression of ideas and engagement with those we disagree with. The government is meant to serve the needs of the people. Without the people speaking to elected officials about the issues they care about, nothing will get done.

Freedom of speech allows the people of the United States, and namely the media, to convey the ideas to the government of what is working, and what is not.

The media, a large proponent to democracy, acts as the messenger to the government to relay what the majority thinks about the government. For example, recent media outlets have reported the general upset of the public following the overturn of *Roe v. Wade*. While this opinion cannot affect those who sit on the bench, it can impact the passing of federal legislation on whether or not Congress will pass a law protecting abortion.

Without freedom of speech, the media would not be allowed to print this consensus and Congress would not be aware of public unrest. This engagement of civil discourse directly impacts how our legislators act. This should be with the majority of the public's interest at heart.

Freedom of speech, and by extent civil discourse, exists as a proponent to push legislation to be passed in Congress. Without the public outcry or agreement with the actions of Congress and the media thus reporting on that reaction, Congress and other members of the government would remain unaware of public dissatisfaction/satisfaction of recent actions. At the heart of America's democracy, the government works for the people and should act accordingly. Freedom of speech and civil discourse is the very foundation of this country and would not function without it.