



BREAKING NEWS: New Jersey Becomes 15th New Voices State!

New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy has signed into law [S108](#), making New Jersey the fifteenth state to adopt New Voices legislation restoring and protecting student press freedom. The Student Press Law Center, the Garden State Scholastic Press Association and the Journalism Education Association commend the New Jersey legislature and Governor Murphy for their unanimous support of student press freedom, and thank all of the students, advisers and supporters who have worked tirelessly for years to achieve this moment.

The bill, which passed the legislature unanimously earlier this year, prohibits the censorship of student journalists except in narrow circumstances. It will also protect student media advisers from retaliation when they refuse to illegally censor their students. The bill takes effect immediately. New Jersey's student journalists now explicitly have the freedom to determine the content of the student media and tell the stories that matter to them and their communities without undue restriction.

Before this legislation, New Jersey was one of 36 states hamstrung by the U.S. Supreme Court's 1988 *Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier* decision which created an intentionally vague and problematic standard for censorship of student-produced work. *Hazelwood* is commonly used by school administrators to censor their student journalists for subjective reasons often related more to the reaction of adults to student media rather than the quality of the media itself. In New Jersey this has included suppression of articles critical of a school superintendent, discussing students smoking in school bathrooms, and even an article about the censorship of student media. Yesterday's action by Governor Murphy ensures student journalists can pursue quality journalism on the issues of importance to their schools and their communities.

The work does not end here. Now, we turn to ensuring that every New Jersey student journalist, adviser and administrator understands how the new law impacts the rights of student journalists. We'll need your help to do so. Work is already underway to educate New Jerseyans on the law, their rights and their responsibilities. Additionally, amendments by Governor Murphy inserted an unconstitutional ban on profanity into the law, which the SPLC and others have vowed to fix in the next legislative session. Anyone interested in joining these efforts — particularly students and advisers — should contact Hillary Davis at hdavis@splc.org.

In the meantime, please take a moment to send a thank you note or email to the main sponsors of the bill for all their work championing this new law: [Senator Nia Gill](#), [Assemblyman Ralph Caputo](#), [Senator Shirley Turner](#), and [Assemblyman Harold Wirths](#). New Jerseyans, thank your local legislator for voting in support of the bill. You can find more information about how to contact your legislator [here](#).

Congratulations, New Jersey!