

Statement of Dean G. Marcus Cole, Notre Dame Law School, October 8, 2019:

The Attorney General of the United States will be speaking here at Notre Dame Law School this Friday, October 11, and there appears to be a need to clarify the policy regarding speakers at the Law School.

From time to time, speakers will be invited by the Law School, faculty, student groups, or organizations affiliated with the University of Notre Dame, to speak at the Law School. Sometimes those speakers are government officials responsible for controversial policies. Sometimes they are people who are known to espouse controversial points of view. As long as they are here at Notre Dame Law School, they are free to say whatever is on their mind within the bounds of law.

Freedom of speech matters. As Frederick Douglass once said, “To suppress free speech is a double wrong. It violates the rights of the hearer as well as those of the speaker.”

Just as speakers are free to speak, protesters are free to protest. They must do so in a place and manner that respects the rights of speakers to speak and listeners to listen, and that is consistent with the educational mission of the Law School. Student groups and other organizations which hold contrary points of view have every right to schedule their own programs with their own speakers, and these speakers’ rights will be protected in just the same way.

Notre Dame Law School will neither endorse nor condemn invited speakers. An institution of higher education must be a place where controversial ideas and points of view are expressed, heard, and discussed.

This is such a place.

G. Marcus Cole
Dean, Notre Dame Law School