

Socrates Café

Wednesday, February 15, 2017

*All political, economic and social points of view are welcomed and encouraged.
The only ground rule is that we will be polite to those opinions that differ from our own.*

What Limits Should There Be On Individual Rights In A Free Society?

The first ten amendments to the Constitution delineate restraints on the government so as to keep the freedom of the governed paramount. We are guaranteed, among other rights, freedom of speech, assurance that we can practice our religion, the right to keep and bear arms, protection against unreasonable searches and seizures, and the safety of not being forced to become a witness against ourselves.

However, we are continually confronted by the question of when do individual rights constrain the rights of others and, conversely, when do the perceived rights of others adversely impact the rights of the individual.

Here are specific examples of such conflicts. What is the appropriate resolution for these and such others as you can enumerate – and why?

- Should the owner of a bakery, who believes same sex relationships are a sin, be required to prepare a cake for a gay wedding decorated with an image of the couple?
- Should public school and state university teachers be allowed to express personal political opinions in class?
- Is it the civil right of protestors to disrupt or prohibit speeches at public or university events with which they disagree?
- Should a small business, owned by a family who does not want to cover birth control pills or abortifacients for employees, be required to do so?
- Should a qualified worker have to join a union to be hired or to remain employed?
- Is it appropriate for the government to sue a business or other enterprise if it believes the minority/female hiring or career advancement is insufficient?
- Should the donations of individuals, including officers of companies, to political and advocacy groups be made public?

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