

Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District

This landmark Supreme Court Case ended with the declaration that students and teachers do not "shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate."



Dec.
11,
1965

- A group of students from Drake University, Grinnell College, and Iowa State University meet at the home of Maggie and Bill Eckhardt to organize a silent political protest of the Vietnam War.
- They plan to wear black armbands on Dec. 16th as a symbol of mourning for the deceased in Vietnam.

Roosevelt High School's Liberal Religious Youth group meet at the Eckhardt home after hearing of the college students' plan. They decide that they would join the black armband protest and urge their friends to do the same.

Dec.
12,
1965

- Eighth grader Mary Beth Tinker (13 years old) wears a black armband and is suspended from Harding Junior High School.
- Her suspension is based on School Board policy that prohibits anything which "disturbs the peace" or proves to be a "distracting influence" on education within the Des Moines school district.

Hope Tinker (11 years old), Mary Beth's sister, and her brothers John (15 years old) and Paul (8 years old), along with Christopher Eckhardt (16 years old) wear armbands to school and also face suspension.

Dec.
16,
1965

Dec.
17,
1965



Dec.
21,
1965

At a School Board Meeting, Iowa Civil Liberties Union attorney insisted that the armband rule be repealed and that the students be reinstated. The School Board votes 5-4 to maintain the ban.

U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Iowa upholds the prohibition against armbands, determining that the school district's concern for "the disciplined atmosphere of the classroom" outweighed free speech concerns. Decision is sustained when the Eighth Circuit Court deadlocked in its review, which results in a direct appeal to the Supreme Court

Sept.
1966



- U.S. troop numbers in Vietnam rise to 500,000.
- Major protests break out across the United States from San Francisco to New York City.

1967

- Supreme Court rules in favor of the students in a 7-2 decision. The Court held that the prohibition against the wearing of armbands violates the students' freedom of speech protections guaranteed by the First Amendment.
- The Court also held that the students did not lose their First Amendment rights when they stepped onto school property.

Feb.
1969

