

**NATIONAL**  
**COALITION**  
**AGAINST**  
**CENSORSHIP**

**NCAC Condemns Chicago City Council's Efforts to Censor Art Exhibition Criticizing Government Actions**

January 23, 2025 — As an organization committed to defending freedom of speech, thought, and inquiry, the National Coalition Against Censorship is alarmed by recent calls from Chicago city councilmembers to remove an artwork from its display at the Chicago Cultural Center because, they allege, the work's criticisms of the United States and Israel are "offensive." We support the Center in its decision to keep the work on display.

Despite the alders' claims, there is no legally defined category of "hate speech" that is "unprotected" by the Constitution, and because "hate speech" is not a defined term, its invocation enables subjective interpretations that might apply, as here, to core political speech. Additionally, political criticism of the U.S. government lies at the very center of the First Amendment's protection, as does the political criticism of foreign leaders. The removal of the work as a result of the alders' complaints would constitute an impermissible suppression of speech based on its viewpoint – in violation of the First Amendment.

While some city alders may find the sculpture distasteful or even offensive, the purpose of public arts funding is to serve the broad cultural interests of public audiences, not to simply reflect the majority tastes of city administrators.

The National Coalition Against Censorship supports the Chicago Cultural Center in keeping the contested artwork on view, and encourages its reinstatement of the wall label accompanying the work.

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**National Coalition Against Censorship**

Since its inception in 1974, the National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC) has functioned as a first responder in protecting freedom of expression, a fundamental human right and a keystone of democracy. Representing more than 60 trusted education, publishing, and arts organizations, NCAC encourages and facilitates dialogue between diverse voices and perspectives, including those that have historically been silenced.