

**2015**

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### **High School Students, Teachers Confront Student Media Censorship**

A survey of high school student journalists and their media advisers attending a national scholastic journalism convention indicates that censorship by school officials may be on the increase.

Of the 6,015 students and teachers who attended the National High School Journalism Convention in Orlando, Fl., Nov. 12-15, 2015, 513 students and 48 advisers responded to survey questions asking about their experiences with censorship of student media.

Significant numbers of both students (28 percent) and advisers (29 percent) said school officials had told them not to publish or air something. Twenty-nine percent of advisers reported a school official reviews the content of their student news medium before it is published or aired. And 63 percent of students said someone other than student editors had the final authority to determine the content of the student media they advise. Each of these numbers represents a significant increase over numbers from a previous survey given at the same convention in 2014.

In addition, 19 percent of advisers said school officials had threatened their position as adviser or their job at the school based on content decisions their students had made. In 2014, only seven percent of advisers had a similar response.

Student and adviser respondents both indicated self-censorship was an issue they confronted. Thirty-three percent of students and 25 percent of advisers said their staff had decided not to publish something based on the belief that school officials would censor it.

The survey was administered and the results tabulated by Mark Goodman and Maggie Cougar of the Center for Scholastic Journalism at Kent State University on behalf of the Student Press Law Center with the support of the convention sponsors, the National Scholastic Press Association and the Journalism Education Association. The results are not intended to represent a random sampling of students nationwide, but are an anecdotal indication of their experiences and those of their advisers.

“In almost every context, students and advisers reported more actual and threatened censorship than they had in 2014,” said Mark Goodman, Knight Chair in Scholastic Journalism at Kent State University and the survey’s principal investigator. “These are alarming times for those concerned with the lessons about press freedom and democracy we’re teaching in America’s schools.”