

# Duquesne to Host National Experts at First Amendment Conference in October

By Ken Walters



Duquesne University will be at the epicenter of one of America's most important topics when the University hosts a non-partisan, balanced look at the amendment that established the foundation for the world's most civilized nation.

The *National Conference on the First Amendment: Bedrock of American Freedom*, to be held on Oct. 21-22, comes at a time when many experts believe that freedom of speech, religion, assembly and the press are not fully appreciated, says Duquesne University President Ken Gormley. The conference continues Gormley's civil discourse series, which began in 2016.

"From the start, the conference was designed to be respectful of all points of view," he says. "We have national experts from all different beliefs and backgrounds who will come together at Duquesne to talk about the First Amendment, which is the cornerstone of all of our liberties."

The conference will include panel discussions on a variety of First Amendment topics, including the importance of a free press, and the influence of free speech as it impacts college campuses, national security, new technology and artistic expression.

Moderators and speakers comprise nationally prominent leaders, including legislators, journalists and law scholars. Marty Baron, editor of *The Washington Post*; Dean Baquet, editor of *The New York Times*; Noel Francisco, U.S. solicitor general; Tom Ridge, former U.S. secretary of Homeland Security and former Pennsylvania governor; Duquesne alumnus General Mike Hayden, former CIA and NSA director; and legendary First Amendment lawyer Floyd Abrams will speak at the conference. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Ohio Governor John Kasich will provide video

presentations. Harvard Law School professor and television commentator Alan Dershowitz will appear via Skype.

"At this moment in our nation's history, it's particularly important for Americans to rediscover the central role that the First Amendment plays in our democracy," Gormley says. "All other freedoms under our Constitution are imperiled if fundamental First Amendment freedoms are undermined. With the help of some of the best minds in the country, this gathering can be a catalyst for positive change."

The conference will also offer international perspectives. Russian journalist Elizaveta Osetinskaya, a former editor-in-chief of the Russian edition of *Forbes*, and Amanda Bennett, director of Voice of America, will speak on the First Amendment's role as a beacon of liberty.

The conference will be webcast; and a variety of videos, podcasts and white papers will be made available online, allowing the program to reach a global audience.

The conference is presented by Duquesne and sponsored by The Pittsburgh Foundation in collaboration with the National Constitution Center, the Newseum, the Knight First Amendment Institute at Columbia University and other organizations dedicated to advancing First Amendment principles.

"We have galvanized a wide network of foundations, universities and educational institutions across the U.S. to create a national dialogue on the First Amendment," Gormley says. "We're excited to present this important program."

For more information about the conference, visit [www.duq.edu/1A](http://www.duq.edu/1A). ♦

