



The Tinker Tour: Taking Freedom of Speech on the Road

Who: Mary Beth Tinker, a lead plaintiff in the landmark 1969 U.S. Supreme Court case *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District*. In the ruling, the court upheld students' First Amendment right to express themselves non-disruptively in public schools. To this day, the case sets the legal standard for students' free-speech rights – including, increasingly, the authority of schools to regulate online speech. Accompanying Tinker on the tour is Mike Hiestand, who has written and lectured extensively on legal issues affecting the student media and worked for more than 20 years as an attorney for the Student Press Law Center.

What: A nationwide RV tour this fall that will take Tinker and Hiestand across the country to speak about the *Tinker* case and the current state of free speech and civics awareness among America's young people, and to hear their own stories of trying to use their voices to make change.

Where: The Tinker Tour will kick off on Constitution Day (Tues., Sept. 17) on Independence Mall in Philadelphia and from there will visit schools, universities, libraries and even youth detention centers across the country. Among the stops will be Mary Beth Tinker's own junior high school in Des Moines, Iowa. In all, the tour will visit 19 states and the District of Columbia.

Why: The goal of the Tinker Tour is to bring real-life civics lessons to schools and communities through Tinker's story and those of other young people. This year marks 25 years since the Supreme Court undermined some of the strong free-expression protections of the *Tinker* ruling in a 1988 case, *Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier*. The 25th anniversary makes it timely to take stock of how a generation under *Hazelwood* has affected the learning environment.

How: The Tinker tour has been made possible by donations from many individuals, foundations and journalism organizations, all of whom contributed to the cause through a grassroots campaign through StartSomeGood. The presenting sponsor of the tour is the Student Press Law Center, www.splc.org. The SPLC is a nonprofit organization with nearly 40 years of experience supporting youth voices, and is assisting the tour with organizational and promotional assistance. The SPLC is an advocate for, and provides programming in the areas of, student First Amendment rights, for transparency in government, for youth civic engagement, and for online civility. The Tour has the endorsement of dozens of education and civil-liberties organizations, including the NAACP, the Journalism Education Association, the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, the American Constitution Society, the Society of Professional Journalists, the National Constitution Center and many more.