



Press Release: The 3rd CD Democrats of Wisconsin condemn the hateful and unsafe rhetoric displayed by the UW Eau Claire Republican Party

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 28, 2025

The 3rd Congressional District Democrats of Wisconsin Condemn Hateful and Unsafe Rhetoric Displayed by the UW–Eau Claire College Republicans

Eau Claire, WI — The 3rd Congressional District Democrats of Wisconsin strongly condemn the hateful and discriminatory actions taken by members of the UW–Eau Claire College Republicans during a recent Halloween party.

Social media posts from the October 27th event depict an individual dressed as an ICE agent “arresting” another person costumed as a “stereotypical” Latino immigrant. This display is deeply offensive and unacceptable, and we call on UW–Eau Claire officials to address this matter swiftly and decisively.

This type of hateful rhetoric has no place on a college campus. To trivialize the unlawful arrest and detention of people of color is a despicable act that perpetuates fear and harm in our communities. Many people of color — including U.S. citizens — live under the threat of racial profiling and warrantless actions by immigration authorities. Making light of these injustices undermines the safety and dignity of students of color and violates the Code of Conduct that governs all recognized student organizations.

William Garcia, Chair of the 3rd Congressional District Democrats, stated:

“At a time when College and Young Republican organizations nationwide are facing scrutiny for racist behavior, leaders of groups like the UW–Eau Claire College Republicans must be especially vigilant about preventing and condemning offensive conduct. Similar incidents — including the recent group text from Young Republican leaders using racist and antisemitic language and the 2022 expulsion of the UW–La Crosse College Republicans for racist sidewalk messages — show a troubling pattern that cannot be ignored. The UWEC College Republicans must take responsibility for this racist action.”

Following the posting of these offensive images, Brady Penfield, a paid organizer with Turning Point USA, publicly defended the photos as an exercise of free speech. This defense is misguided. Free speech protects expression from government censorship, but it does not shield individuals or organizations from public accountability or criticism. Members of the campus community have every right to denounce and protest hateful actions.

Furthermore, student organizations are funded through student fees paid by all UW–Eau Claire students. With that funding comes the responsibility to create an inclusive and respectful environment for everyone. Promoting imagery that glorifies ICE or mocks immigrant communities violates that responsibility and disrespects students of color on campus.

The UW-Eau Claire College Democrats also issued the following statement: “With ICE becoming a presence in more communities and schools, fear and uncertainty have become an inevitable reality for many students. As college campuses grapple with the appropriate response to this unprecedented situation it is up to student organizations to create a safe and welcoming environment for students. This weekend a student organization posted a distasteful photo mocking ICE immigration arrests. This type of behavior has no place on our campus. Making light of a serious reality for people is never something a UWEC student organization should support or promote. Student organizations should promote community, well-being and inclusion regardless of political affiliation. The UW-Eau Claire Democrats strive to foster a close community for students to thrive in. This cannot happen when students feel unwelcome or unsafe. We encourage all clubs to be mindful of the rhetoric they are promoting and the impact it may have on students outside the general community.”

The 3rd CD Democrats of Wisconsin urge UW–Eau Claire administrators to uphold the university’s values of respect, inclusion, and accountability by taking appropriate action.