

### AAUP Opposes New York Assembly Bill A.8392

The American Association of University Professors [joins](#) its New York State conference and New York University chapter in opposing New York Assembly Bill A.8392.

This bill would prohibit colleges and universities from using state aid to fund academic groups or associations that have passed resolutions or taken official actions to promote boycotts against higher education institutions in countries where the New York Board of Regents charters institutions, including Israel, Lebanon, the Czech Republic, and Hungary. The proposed legislation would also prohibit a college or university from using state funding to pay membership dues to those associations or to reimburse travel or lodging for an employee attending any meeting of such an association. The proposed legislation is a response to the recent decision by the American Studies Association (ASA) to endorse an academic boycott of Israeli universities.

AAUP members hold a variety of views about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the efficacy of academic boycotts. The AAUP as an organization, however, [opposes all such boycotts, including the one endorsed by the ASA](#), because they are inimical to principles of academic freedom. However, Assembly Bill A.8392, if enacted, could impose greater restrictions on the academic freedom of faculty members in New York than are threatened by the ASA boycott resolution. While the pending bill would not bar scholars from participating in or attending meetings of such an organization, it would impose a political litmus test on faculty members seeking university support for research meetings and travel. Universities can limit funding for scholarly travel and participation in professional associations, but such funding decisions should be made by representative faculty bodies based on professional standards, rather than on political or ideological criteria dictated by elected officials. The bill would also penalize faculty members whose participation in the ASA or any similar organization is unrelated to the organization's stance on a boycott—even those faculty members seeking to reverse the organization's support for a boycott.

The AAUP is concerned that the decision by the ASA to endorse an academic boycott of Israel is producing a backlash that is potentially as dangerous, or more so, than the boycott itself. Another example is the response of the Jewish organization Hillels of Georgia, which, by its own account, “compiled a list of all the Georgian professors or graduate students that voted in favor of the boycott, listed where they work, and encouraged our student body to choose wisely when they register for classes.” This measure, [the organization states](#), “sends a clear message to university staff that they do not live in an ivory tower, and that their actions can and will have consequences on their immediate lives.” In fact, this compilation is tantamount to a political blacklist, reminiscent of the McCarthy era.

It is the position of the AAUP that academic boycotts contravene the principles of academic freedom. The Association has nevertheless [asserted](#) that it is “the right of individual faculty members or groups of academics not to cooperate with other individual faculty members or academic institutions with whom or with which they disagree.” Academic freedom is meaningless if it does not protect those who support unpopular positions, including the advocacy of academic boycotts. We urge opponents of academic boycotts to engage boycott advocates in dialogue, rather than seek to impose inappropriate restrictions on their activities that violate principles of academic freedom.