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Artist Sues Cleveland State for Censoring Trump Message on His Iconic 'The Politician: A Toy' Sculpture

Posted By Vince Grzegorek [Email Us!](#) on Thu, Jan 24, 2019 at 2:32 pm



Billie Lawless

Lawyers representing artist Billie Lawless today filed a federal lawsuit against Cleveland State University accusing the school of violating his rights by placing a covering over the phrase "BUILD A WALL OF PUSSIE," which Lawless added to the ever-evolving sculpture last October. The phrase, of course, is a jab at two

aspects of Trumpian history. It was only a matter of days after it was added that CSU asked Lawless to remove the wording. He declined and asked them to remove the covering. They declined. And here we are.

"The Politician: A Toy" has resided off East 18th on the CSU campus since 2008, before which it had lived on private land for 14 years. Throughout the years, it's stood as a skewering and satirical comment on politicians and politics. Notable phrasings in previous years included "Obama Scare," but CSU never attempted to censor the messages until recently and only after "BUILD A WALL OF PUSSIE" was added, according to the lawsuit.

According to the **Pattakos Law Firm**, which is representing Lawless, "CSU agreed that Lawless would retain all ownership and intellectual property rights in it, that the University would not 'modify, disassemble or demolish the Sculpture.'" The agreement, per **Cleveland.com**, also includes a six-month notice from either side before cancellation, so even though CSU informed Lawless in late November that it would seek to end the contract, the sculpture remains.

“CSU sought out Mr. Lawless to display his sculpture, and benefited not just from the artwork itself, but in the message sent to its students, faculty, and the public at large about the value of free speech in granting such a forum to an accomplished artist and social commentator,” Pattakos Law Firm attorney Andy Geronimo said in a release. “Lawless has continuously updated the sculpture with commentary on controversial issues, and only now, in response to his timely criticism of President Trump, has CSU acted to censor it. This type of viewpoint-based discrimination clearly violates the First Amendment and also constitutes an attack on the integrity of Lawless’s artwork that’s prohibited by the Visual Artists Rights Act.”

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CSU's motivation likely had more to do with the inclusion of "pussie," no matter how it was spelled, rather than the politics, but that's all for the lawyers to sort out.

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