

The Oconee Enterprise

UGA clinic focuses on speech, press freedoms

by Julia Fechter

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In light of citizens voicing their opinions about COVID-19 and race relations, there is now a greater need for more legal knowledge around the First Amendment.

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University of Georgia School of Law assistant professor Clare Norins will launch a First Amendment clinic this August to provide legal services regarding freedoms of the press, speech and the rights to assemble and petition the government for grievances. The service will be offered to independent media outlets, students, governmental entities and other members of the public.

Clinic hours will be from Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., except for federal and university holidays.

The clinic can be reached by phone at (706) 227-5421 or via the "Contact" form on its website, firstamendment.law.uga.edu/contact/.

Law clinic students will help educate community members by answering their questions on the First Amendment.

Norins explained that the clinic is funded by The Stanton Foundation, whose philanthropic mission includes supporting expressive freedoms protected by the U.S. Constitution and fostering a more informed citizenry.

"The clinic expands UGA Law School's experiential learning opportunities by providing students with real-world practice experience," Norins said. She added that it prepares students to take leadership roles in protecting free expression and freedom of the press.

She added that the clinic will not charge clients for its services, so that it can facilitate legal representation of individuals or organizations who may otherwise not have access to counsel with First Amendment expertise.

Law clinic students will help educate community members by answering their questions. Norins added that the clinic may be particularly helpful to journalists.

"A free press is essential to a healthy democracy and ensures that discussion on matters of public concern is 'uninhibited, robust, and wide-open,'" she said, citing the well-known 1964 case of *New York Times v. Sullivan*, "By lawyers partnering with journalists to protect press freedoms, we also protect the public's right to be informed, to speak, and to engage in the political process."

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