

Overheated rhetoric in Chicago

By [Amy Frykholm](#)

January 31, 2012

After glancing at recent headlines and listening to rumors, I was under the impression that the Chicago City Council had passed repressive new restrictions on protests leading up to the G8 summit in May. The newspapers' pictures of Mayor Rahm Emanuel looked dictatorial. I pictured Emanuel strong-arming the council into passing a crackdown.

"Rahm Ramps Up the Repression" ran one headline. Even the *Chicago Tribune* used the phrases "unfettered power" and "stifle dissent."

When I finally got around to researching the matter, I found little to substantiate the image forming in my mind. It is true that Emanuel proposed heavier fines for resisting arrest, and he wanted to restrict parades to two hours length. (The current limit is 2 hours and 15 minutes.)

In the end, Emanuel dropped both of these requests. The changes that were made are of little consequence. There was little support for any large-scale repression of free speech.

I have been a backseat supporter of the Occupy Movement, cheering for it everywhere. I haven't had a lot of patience for those calling for the Occupiers to "hone their message," and I've been moved by the experimental forms of community that Occupy is making happen on the ground.

But I find the kind of overheated rhetoric that Occupiers brought to this occasion to be unhelpful in the extreme. It makes them look desperate for an enemy, and it underplays their legitimate concerns.