Onion Brief presentation

About the Onion
- Founded in 1988 (not 1756)
- Funny as hell
- Newspaper parody

The InfoWars website
- Alex Jones
- False statements regarding Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre in 2012
- Victims sue; $1.4B judgement
- Jones declares bankruptcy
- Onion wins Infowars at auction of Jones' assets
- Site currently "off air."
- The Onion currently parodies Infowars at https://therealinfowars.com/

The amicus curiae brief
- A real brief, and a parody

The underlying case: *Novak v. City of Parma*
- Lawsuit by a man arrested for posting on Facebook a parody of the Parma PD
- Acquitted of the original charges, sued over 1st amendment issues
- Court found against the plaintiff, based in part on Qualified Immunity
- Plaintiff appealed to Supreme Court for certiorari
- Onion filed brief in favor of certiorari
- Babylon Bee, another satirical site, filed a brief as well.
- Certiorari was not granted.

The Arguments

The arguments (I did not paste here, but are in the table of contents of the brief.) employed in the brief are based on the existence of the first amendment, but did not expound directly on the question of why satire, parody and truth are public moral goods.

The questions of the case: Is parody protected speech under the first amendment? Was the plaintiff deprived of his rights when he was arrested, and tried? Does he have the right to sue for redress? (The 6th circuit court of appeals thought not. The supreme court failed to provide an avenue for remedy.)

The overarching questions at issue: What is the inherent value of satire or parody? Should a satirical author be protected from government action? (i.e. Is the first amendment a good thing?)

Satire serves to expose the truth. Bad satire, attempting to obscure the truth, also serves to expose the truth. Bad satire is essentially trolling. This is accessible to the "reasonable reader," and can reveal what the author is trying to hide, especially to a critically thinking reader." (One should encourage one's adversaries to employ satire.)

We tend to finish our arguments on this question with the words "the first amendment." The argument stops there. Our social environment today makes it essential that the argument

“why the first amendment” be made over and over. (Is it important that Jesus said “Love thy neighbor,” or is it more important that loving one’s neighbor provides benefits in real life? This reflects back to the question posed by Socrates to Euthyphro: "Is the pious loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is loved by the gods?"

In an era where truth itself is being attacked it is up to the lovers of truth to defend it. Failing to make this defense allows the liars to assume power; to rule. People lie for reasons, the gist of which is that the truth works against their goals and ambitions. If these goals and ambitions will actually harm the liars’ audience, they must be concealed from those to whom they would cause harm, or they risk being rejected. The first amendment is necessary for this defense. There must be sufficient discourse to allow the truth to be accepted, and falsehoods to be dispelled. The refutation of falsehoods can be accomplished by argument and exposition, one powerful tool of which is ridicule. Satire.

But now our argument must turn to the question: Is truth a moral good? My own argument is that truth is the highest, or most important value, or virtue (or piousness). To worship a god that isn’t there is simply erroneous. To invoke this non-existent god in civil/social environments is erroneous. Error leads ultimately to tragedy. (“The wages of sin [error] is death.”)

https://theonion.com/mar-a-lago-assistant-manager-wondering-if-anyone-coming-1819579801/

Satire/Parody
Presentation of obviously ridiculous statements as facts

Key Satirical Techniques (Google Search results): They left out juxtaposition!

- Hyperbole / Exaggeration: Grossly overstating a situation or enlarging a trait beyond normal bounds to make its flaws look ridiculous.
- Irony: Stating or presenting the opposite of what is actually meant, creating a gap between appearance and reality.
- Incongruity: Placing absurd, out-of-place, or incompatible elements into an otherwise normal setting or story.
- Parody: Imitating the specific style, tone, or work of a person, genre, or institution to mock it.
- Reversal: Flipping the normal order of events, social roles, or expectations (e.g., children acting as corporate CEOs or subordinates ruling over leaders).
- Understatement: Deliberately minimizing the significance of a dramatic or severe situation for comic or critical effect.
- Sarcasm & Invective: Using sharp, sneering praise that actually means disapproval (sarcasm) or direct, harsh, abusive language attacking a target (invective).
- Caricature: Exaggerating specific physical features or personality traits of a person for comic effect.

Common Rhetorical Devices & Their Effects (another google search)

Device	What It Is	Rhetorical Effect
Rhetorical Question	Asking a question with no expected answer	Forces the audience to pause, think deeply, or agree with the underlying point.
Anaphora	Repeating a word or phrase at the start of sentences	Creates rhythm, builds emotional intensity, and makes a point unforgettable.
Metaphor / Analogy	Comparing two unrelated things directly	Simplifies complex or abstract ideas by linking them to something familiar.
Hyperbole	Extreme exaggeration	Grabs attention and highlights the sheer scale or importance of an issue.
Parallelism	Balancing similar grammatical structures	Gives the writing a smooth flow and makes arguments feel more structured and logical.