

October 27, 2009

Mayor Sandi Bloem
Coeur d'Alene City Hall
710 E. Mullan Avenue
Coeur d'Alene, Idaho 83814

Dear Mayor Bloem,

I am writing to you to emphatically respond to your astonishing abuse of the powers of your office. I am shocked at the threat of legal action by the City of Coeur d'Alene to stifle political debate and trample the First Amendment Rights of the members of the Kootenai County Reagan Republicans. Your statements in the Coeur d'Alene Press today and the intimidating words and actions of city employees demonstrate a cavalier disdain for citizens' rights of free expression and a willingness to use the legal power of the city to suppress political dissent.

Your published statement that the city is not "tolerant of circulating" certain political communication during a political campaign demonstrates an incredible abuse of the city's legal authority. You and city administrator Wendy Gabriel's threats of legal action to suppress political expression cannot go unaddressed.

In a small flyer supporting candidates our club endorsed and distributed by members of our club, we make the statement that:

"Jim Brannon is such a threat to the tax-and-spend liberals at city hall that, in a shocking act of dirty politics, they got him fired from his job as Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity."

Please note that it is neither stated or even implied that Brannon's firing was a result of any official act of the City of Coeur d'Alene or any of its officials pursuing their official duties. I strongly stand by my belief that Brannon's firing was orchestrated by political motivated persons involved in city government but not by the City government itself. To misinterpret this statement is a ruse to create a weak excuse to intimidate those of us making the accusation.

I am also taken aback that your administration would utilize the offices of the City Administrator, the City Clerk and city attorneys to intimidate the political opponents of city council members. It is highly inappropriate for City Administrator Wendy Gabriel to actively involve herself in suppressing political expression by making judgments, specific

accusations, and threats of legal action about campaign literature during a political campaign as she did in the Press article. It is also highly inappropriate for your administration to direct the City Clerk to contact an organization and direct specific action under the threat of “our attorneys,” as was done to our organization yesterday.

If any individual actually feels slandered or libeled by our honest statement of belief and think they can prove such an allegation, I challenge them to seek immediate legal remedy. Private citizens have that right, but governments have no right to seek redress from citizens freely expressing dissenting opinions. We are protected by the First Amendment. For you to unconstitutionally use the collective legal power of the City to cajole and intimidate our club away from a free expression of views is unconscionable.

For you, as Mayor of Coeur d’Alene, or any other official to imply that our statement that Brannon’s firing was politically motivated is “a lie” it would require omniscience and the ability to know every single action of every person in city hall. That is patently ridiculous.

Instead of suppressing free expression and promoting a cover-up by threatening legal action, I ask you to initiate a real investigation into the politically motivated firing of Jim Brannon. If, as Mike Kennedy contends, the firing is “tied to Federal monies” I urge you to call for an investigation by the U.S. Attorney’s office immediately.

If your administration continues this pattern of intimidation and attempts suppress to free expression by threats of government action, we will be forced seek protection of our First Amendment rights from incursions by the City of Coeur d’Alene in the courts.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey L. Ward

Kootenai County Reagan Republicans