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Shoshone County  
Solid Waste Department  
700 Bank St. Suite 120  
Wallace, Idaho  
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Dear Vince Peterson,

Thank you for your letter regarding my complaint about the confederate battle flag “stars and bars” on your employee’s truck which you subsequently found unwarranted. In your letter you named your employee as Mr. Arthur however, my complaint is against these so called “decorations” on the vehicle not against him and contend it would have been better if you safeguarded your employee’s name. My concern was that the individual parking this truck on public property was indeed employed by the county and, if so, they needed additional professionalism and sensitivity toward the public.

It is my contention that this confederate flag located on both the front of the license plate area and rear window of the vehicle constitutes an abridgment of the Shoshone County Personnel Policy Manual. While your employee could be dismissed as being ignorant of the affront he caused, the fact that his vehicle was parked in a prominent spot so that people entering the County Transfer-station could not miss his confederate flags—when the rest of our nation was celebrating our diversity in Martin Luther King’s birthday—either shows employee is either ignorant of current public affairs or that he was making a political statement neither is acceptable.

In addition, even those with the most closed social awareness, realize that this emblem is a comment in support of: enslavement, racism, bigotry, xenophobia, cruelty and most recently used in the death of people of color.

Further this comment is directed at but not limited to: black, latin, native american and asian americans. Moreover, this confederate flag has become the chosen emblem of the white power movement which advocates not only against people of color but also those with different sexual identities and religions including Islam, Judaism and Catholics.

While your employee might chose to use the inane argument that this flag is historical nature they would be wrong. This state was founded by President Lincoln and has never been on our states' flag poles. This argument would only show disrespect to our state and serve to denigrate our founder who gave his life in opposition to this racism.

When you allow any employee to make social comments outside the normative position, you endorse this behavior as acceptable public policy for our entire county government. I contend this behavior is wrong and in violation of Shoshone County Personnel Policy Section VI. subsection D pg. 34. which clearly states, "Epithets, derogatory comments, slurs, propositioning, or otherwise offensive words or comments on the basis of race, color, religion,... whether made in general, directed to an individual or directed to a group of people regardless of whether the behavior was intended to harass... is a prohibited from of harassment."

I recognize that while this manual maybe meant within the confines of the interworking of our government personnel, it should follow that it transfers to working relations with the public at an even more stringent level. Since comments are verbal, written and visual this would include your employees confederate flag. Therefore, I believe that this section applies to your employee along with your guidance.

I am aware of your employees' right to self expression under the First Amendment of the United States Constitution but it is well proven that when you take employment you subjugate those rights to guidelines of your employer as a condition of employment which in this case is Shoshone County and its procedures. Had this vehicle been parked elsewhere it would be met with my distain but not legal redress.

In closing, our governments —at all levels —in America are instituted to strive for justice, peace and dignity for all our citizens. We ought to error in behalf of inclusion of our citizenry that those "barriers which divide us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease". Therefore, I will

continue to mount a vigorous defense of my position and consult the County Prosecuting Attorney and other legal entities to redress this wrong.

Best Regards

Jon Ruggles