

ACLJ Files Lawsuit After Park Volunteer “Fired” for Refusing to Remove Trump Bumper Stickers from Personal Truck

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[/EINPresswire.com/](https://www.einpresswire.com/) -- The American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ) has just filed a lawsuit against the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission (Case 2:23-cv-00702) to defend the First Amendment rights of a state park volunteer who was “fired” for refusing to remove Trump bumper stickers from his personal vehicle.

As reported at [ACLJ.org](https://aclj.org), Gary Formhals, a former U.S. Navy Chief, has been a

volunteer and part-time employee with the Washington State Park system for over 10 years. Just three years ago, Gary received the “Award for Excellence” for his hard work and dedication. In his nomination for that award, staff commended Gary “for his service above and beyond the call of duty, his integrity, and his courteous and kind manner with everyone who meets him.”



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*Jordan Sekulow, ACLJ's
Executive Director*

Earlier this year, Gary, a Republican and supporter of President Trump, was told he needed to remove or cover bumper stickers on his personal vehicle because of a park system policy governing “Public Contact/Communication.” Gary’s bumper stickers included political statements, such as “Trump 2020 and “2-TRUMP-4.”

While Gary was in uniform working as a volunteer and employee, he didn’t share his religious or political beliefs with visitors to the park. But he never thought he was prohibited from expressing his political opinions on his privately owned truck. In fact, park officials knew for years

about Gary’s political bumper stickers.

Not wanting to forfeit his right to free speech, Gary refused to comply with the order to remove his bumper stickers and was forced to leave the park system as both a volunteer and an employee.

Jordan Sekulow, ACLJ's Executive Director, says: "The First Amendment does not allow government officials to censor the speech of those who work for them unless the speech negatively impacts the efficient administration of the workplace. That is not the case here. Even though park officials knew about Gary's political bumper stickers for years, they never did anything about them. It wasn't until a visitor to the park voiced her outrage about Gary's bumper stickers, which she described as 'insurrectionalist [sic],' that the park decided to give Gary an ultimatum: your speech or your job."

Today, the ACLJ filed a lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington challenging the policy under which Gary was forced to resign from his positions. Among other things, the complaint asks the court to hold that the "Public Contact/Communication" policy is unconstitutional.

The policy that was applied to the bumper stickers on Gary's private vehicle is wildly overbroad and reads as follows:

"Public service is the host's highest priority. Be friendly, honest, courteous, and helpful in all interactions with the public. Be positive about the park, staff, and rules. Harassment, including sexual harassment, is inexcusable for both staff and volunteers. Do not express, display, broadcast, distribute or otherwise communicate to the public any personal opinions, messages or points of view while performing host duties, wearing the host vest, or while occupying the host site. This includes the display of expressive items such as stickers, flags, signs, and clothing."
"

The policy disrupts any careful balance between maintaining the efficiency of the public parks and protecting the free speech rights of its volunteers and employees.

Adds Sekulow: "Filing a complaint is the first step of any lawsuit. We expect the defendants to dig in their heels and defend their policy to the bitter end, and we are prepared to engage them every step of the way."

Read the [full complaint here](#).

About ACLJ: The American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ), focusing on the preservation and defense of constitutional rights, is based in Washington, D.C. For more information, visit ACLJ.org.

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