



Social Media Use

OPA received a complaint regarding Instagram postings made by the Named Employee (NE). In one of those postings, the NE included a picture of a mail package with this text: "I don't condone sending package bombs but god it would be nice for Killary and Anti cop Obama to finally STFU! Maybe Obama will stop lying and claiming the good economy is from him. #maga #trump2020 #trump." In another posting, the NE included a picture of himself gesturing with his middle finger. He wrote: "If you support illegal immigrants coming into our country so much then make a difference and bring them into your home and YOU support them you fucksticks! #trump #redwave #republican #makeamericagreatagain #bluelivesmatter #thinblueline #thickblueline #police #cops #freedom."

[OPA concluded](#) that the NE's postings were unprofessional and violated the Department's social media policy. Specifically, OPA determined that the NE's apparent endorsement of violence against political figures and profanity-laced criticism of those who opposed his political positions on immigration, all while identifying himself as a police officer, negatively affected the Department's ability to serve the public and undermined public trust and confidence both in the NE and the Department. The NE acknowledged that his postings violated these policies.

Lastly, while concerned with the vitriol in the postings, OPA ultimately could not establish that the NE engaged in biased policing. An officer can have and express strong feelings concerning immigration without acting contrary to policy or engaging in bias. It is not a policy violation for an officer to hold political views that may be out of line with those possessed by many community members and political figures in the City where that officer serves. The Chief of Police agreed with OPA's recommended findings and made the decision to terminate the NE's employment.

The Ruse Case

The subject was involved in a hit and run accident. Officers were dispatched to the address where the vehicle was registered to try to locate him. Body Worn Video captured the NE discussing using a ruse. The NE said: "It's a lie, but it's fun." The officers contacted the resident, who told them the subject did not live there. They asked for the subject's contact information. The resident got her phone and was looking for the contact information when the NE used a ruse. He said the subject had left a woman in critical condition and that she "might not survive." She provided the officers with the subject's contact information. The resident later informed the subject of what the NE told her. Over the next several days, the subject became increasingly worried and despondent about the possibility that he may have killed someone. Six days after

the incident, he took his life. After reviewing documents and video obtained through public disclosure, the resident filed a complaint with OPA.

Ultimately, [OPA found](#) that the extreme nature of the ruse was not warranted under the circumstances of this case and, even if not a legal cause, the evidence indicated that the ruse was a contributing factor to the subject's suicide. There was an insufficient need to use the ruse, as the resident was being cooperative. There also wasn't exigency for the ruse, given that the subject was thought to have committed a misdemeanor and there were no injuries. The Chief of Police agreed with OPA's recommended findings and made the decision to suspend the NE for six days without pay.

If you have questions, feedback, content requests, or to add/remove your name from this distribution list, please contact Anne Bettesworth, OPA Deputy Director of Public Affairs, at anne.bettesworth@seattle.gov.