

Case A for 2016

There is a job opening in the support services division of the Silver City government. The position is in the IT office. Wilma Whiz applied for the job. Wilma Whiz meets all of the minimum job requirements and in fact, graduated from a prestigious university. She could work any where in the United States but chooses to live in the city where she was raised so she can give back to the community. Wilma Whiz went through the formal interview process and was hired. She works for the city administration but not directly under the City Manager. Her supervisor is Tom Tech.

About 6 months after being hired, the City Manager's son begins to date Wilma Whiz. After one year Wilma marries and becomes the daughter-in-law of the city manager. Around the same time, the salaries of city employees were made available for public review. Soon, citizens and other city employees discovered that Wilma Whiz was paid a salary rate over her pay grade. It was also learned that Wilma was working a flextime schedule. Flextime is officially available to all employees, but the city had never granted an employee request to take advantage of this program until the request came from Wilma Whiz. She was the first employee to receive the flextime benefit.

Other city employees complained when they learned that Wilma was overpaid and that her request for flextime was granted. In response, the City Manager transferred Wilma to a higher-level position in order to justify her salary. Wilma continued to enjoy the flextime benefit.

Case B for 2016

A local environmental nonprofit organization wanted to help their community clean up the local parks that suffered severe damage from a recent tornado that swept through their small rural town. The town did not have the money to undertake the clean-up effort so the nonprofit organization, from outside the community, organized a volunteer team.

The cleanup needed to occur promptly as many of the damaged trees were dying. If the trees were not removed they would pose a safety hazard to the community. Children from the community regularly frequented the park and had already discovered that the fallen trees made for great climbing. These trees, that were so important to the community's park, were planted more than 20 years ago under a federal/state park rehabilitation program that, at the time, provided \$100,000 to rehabilitate the park.

The nonprofit organization asked to meet with the town's parks and maintenance staff to discuss the cleanup. After hearing the nonprofit's concerns, the parks and maintenance foreman and his staff volunteered to assist with the cleanup effort. It was agreed that the cleanup would take place the following Sunday, when the workers would be off the clock.

That Sunday, after a long day of cutting trees and cleaning the park, the town's workers decided that the cut logs could generate revenue for the town. If the logs were hauled off to the town maintenance lot they could be used to create mulch. The mulch could be sold to the citizens for \$3/sq. yard. So the workers went to get the town's trucks and hauled the logs to the town maintenance yard. It also had occurred to them that the logs would make great firewood for their stoves and fireplaces in the upcoming winter months so each worker took a cord of wood for their homes and delivered a cord of wood to the town manager. Before dropping off the wood to the town manager they called to verify that he could use the wood.

Neighbors soon talked about the wood delivery to the town manager's home. When questioned, he stated, "I thought the workers could take the wood home and that I could also use some of the wood myself." The town manager admitted that the use of the government trucks was inappropriate, but he also stated that he thought the workers were using their personal vehicles, not the town vehicles, to transport the wood logs.

Case C for 2016

The municipality was reluctant to join the ranks of those communicating with their constituents via social media. A new IT director convinced the council and the manager that there were economic advantages to using social media. However, many in the local government were uncomfortable with using social media and believed that without a social media ethics policy in place, only problems would ensue.

Within a few months the municipality had a presence on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other social media outlets. Citizens were complaining about municipal services, the attitudes of public employees and elected officials. They were using inappropriate language and in some cases posting veiled threats. The police chief was concerned that the some of the comments might incite violence with racial overtones. The municipality removed all of the negative comments and veiled threats from the social media outlets. It did not keep a record of the comments posted by citizens.

Some municipal employees were outraged that citizens were not allowed to express their opinions. These employees believed the citizens were only “telling it like it is.” So the employees posted comments, including “learn more about your freedom of speech,” and “be an active citizen – participate and communicate.”

Other employees conducted conversations on the municipal Facebook page. These conversations took place as private messages. The municipality learned that some of the private messages contained content that was directed toward their supervisors and other employees, like the statement: “fire the IT director.”

Case D for 2016

It's election time. An employee of the assessor's office, named Future Official, was encouraged by friends and professional acquaintances to run for county council. To run for this office she would need a substantial campaign fund. Future Official also knew that she might have to use personal funds to supplement campaign funds if she wanted her bid to be successful. Her advisors assured her that the likelihood that she will have to use personal funds is very small.

Future Official loved her job at the assessor's office. She always took the initiative to learn more about the unit's operations. She also volunteered to help any one who needed assistance. As a result she learned a great deal about local property values and the community's economic development/urban redevelopment strategies. Using her knowledge of property assessment and economic development she decided to purchase quite a few investment properties in her community. Her intent was to sell or lease the properties, if needed, to help finance her election campaign. While employed at the assessor's office she also shared her knowledge of the local property/economic development environment with a few key developers who later donated over \$50,000 to her campaign.

After Future Official's successful election to the county council, these same developers received approval for local government development projects that are worth over \$2 million dollars. The projects are located next to the properties purchased by Future Official. The developers also hired Future Official's daughter to assist with project development.

Future Official's properties are now worth more than 2 times their original value.

Case E for 2016

Harry Harris is a councilperson on the Beantown council. He has been on the town council for the past 25 years and has been widely admired by community members. This admiration is well deserved. Throughout his time on the council, Harry fought for expanded housing opportunities, including mixed income housing developments. He championed connecting the community to local government by encouraging the development of a council webpage. His dedication to youth is unwavering having created a youth council. Participants in the youth council not only learn how local government works, they also tackle issues of concern to youth of all ages.

Despite his stellar record of service Harry is now facing criticism. In this small town, where jobs are few and far between, he has many family members working in town government. His nephew works in parks and recreation, his wife just became the town manager's administrative assistant, and his daughter will shortly be starting a summer internship with the town attorney.

The election is looming and the opposing candidate, Owen Opposition, has alleged that it is improper for Harry Harris' family members to work for the town. Owen Opposition also made several additional allegations including:

- Harry improperly voted to approve budgets that contained raises for town employees, including his nephew.
- Harry voted to approve a competitively bid contract, that was awarded to his brother.
- Harry created the town attorney's office internship program for the sole purpose of assisting his daughter. Harry's daughter is considering law school and wants to obtain experience in the field of law prior to making her decision. She will be an unpaid intern.

The community, hearing these allegations, is questioning Harry's behavior; some citizens are accusing Harry of unethical behavior.

Case F for 2016

Sally Simpson is an active contributor to Facebook and other social media outlets. She strongly believes in the freedom of expression for the purpose of increasing citizen participation in government. Given the public's diminishing interest in voting, voter registration, attending public meetings and other forms of civic participation Sally has set out to transform her community from one characterized by apathy and disinterest to that of active civic engagement. Sally is an employee of her county social service agency – Cane County Social Services.

Sally is also an avid reader and has kept abreast of developments on government social media policy. Sally recently noted that the federal government released a standard of conduct for personal social media use. Sally believes that local governments will soon be doing the same. She is ready to fight such a policy if it comes to her community because she believes it will infringe on her right to free speech. She also believes that existing social media policies, such that issued by the U.S. Office of Government Ethics, are too vague and can be construed to target employees that are not well liked.

Sally decides to ignore all the talk about social media policy and she continues to actively participate by posting in Facebook and other media outlets. When she goes on social media she uses the name "Sally Social Worker of Cane County." She wants everyone to know she is a government employee who believes it is important to serve your community and be an active citizen. Therefore, she encourages people to register to vote, vote, and to attend town hall meetings. She also encourages people to oppose a local government social media policy. In addition to these activities, Sally regularly uses LinkedIn to endorse the skills of other LinkedIn users, including other government employees. All of this social media activity takes place at her work computer – spending about 30 minutes of her day on social media. Sally claims not to take her morning and afternoon breaks so that she has 30 minutes to search, post and respond.

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