

Todd Starnes: Government Union Wants 'Duck Dynasty' Fans Fired

A union representing federal employees at Eglin Air Force base in Florida is demanding that two senior management officials be removed from their posts because they put decals on their personal trucks supporting *Duck Dynasty* star Phil Robertson.

Alan Cooper, the executive vice president of the local chapter of the American Federation of Government Employees, said one of the officials also displayed the "I Support Phil" decals in his office last month and offered them to subordinates.

"The BUE (bargaining union employee) was clearly offended and disgusted that a senior management official would display the decal on their pod," read an email Cooper wrote.

"We took offense," Cooper told me in a telephone interview. "These two particular individuals have a great amount of influence over individuals who may be gay, who may be African-American – and we have a concern they should not be in a position to exert that influence when it comes to promotions."

In an email that was sent to union members, Cooper said the *Duck Dynasty* decal may be a violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

"Phil Robertson has made disparaging remarks against a vast array of people, which created a firestorm in the media in the recent past," Cooper wrote.

He was referring to comments Robertson made in *GQ* magazine last year about homosexuality and his personal observations about the pre-Civil Rights era. A&E briefly suspended Robertson from his popular reality television show. But the

network reversed its decision after they were overwhelmed by supporters of the program. I write about how Robertson and his family were viciously attacked by the media and militant gay rights organizations in my new book, *God Less America*.

Cooper told me he wants the two civilian managers at the Air Force base removed from their positions.

"I don't know how long these individuals harbored these views—could they have impacted employment opportunities for folks that have been disparaged by the likes of a Phil Robertson," he said.

Regardless, he wants the *Duck Dynasty* fans dealt with, noting "it's definitely 100 percent inappropriate for an organization that espouses a zero tolerance policy" to condone such activity.

"If it's zero tolerance, it's zero tolerance for everybody," he said, referring to the military's anti-discrimination policies.

I spoke with one of the individuals being targeted by the government union. He asked that I not disclose his name. He rejected the accusations that he was a racist or homophobe because he supports *Duck Dynasty*.

"My intent was not to offend anybody," the individual told me. "My intent was to support the show and to show support for his Christian values."

The individual told me he was especially upset after union workers took photographs of his truck and his license plate and emailed the images to other union members. That email was reportedly sent to hundreds and hundreds of personnel.

"I see the email that went out accusing me and my boss of being racist," he said. "That couldn't be farther from the truth."

"I'm pro-family," he said. "I'm pro-life. I don't have a problem with anybody who doesn't agree with me."

He said he has absolutely no plans to remove the decal from his truck.

"I'm not taking it off," he said. "If they want to make me retire early that's what I'll do. But I'm not backing down."

The civilian worker told me it's a First Amendment issue. He said there are plenty of vehicles on the military base that are plastered with all sorts of stickers.

"I disagree with 90 percent of what our Commander in Chief believes in, but I'm not asking anyone to take (an Obama decal) off their vehicle," he said. "It's a freedom of speech issue."

And that's exactly what the Air Force believes it is. They investigated the claims made by the union and determined that the two civilian workers were well within their rights to support *Duck Dynasty*.

"Brigadier General Dave Harris is not taking any action against the individual as the display of such a bumper sticker is considered legally protected speech under the First Amendment," said Andy Bourland, director of public affairs at the military base.

Bourland also told me they looked into the incident involving the decals in the worker's office. They also decided not to take action in that incident.

Eli Craft is a member of the union and he told me he is furious at how union leadership handled the incident.

"It was extremely, extremely upsetting," he said. "The community we live in is a very faith-based community. For someone to say this individual was offensive and if you support him you can't manage or lead a diverse work place—it

blew my mind.”

Craft had nothing but praise for the two managers. He said they are long time veterans of the military and volunteer in the community.

“They are Christians—that’s how they live their lives,” he said.”

And around the Florida panhandle, Craft said there are plenty of *Duck Dynasty* fans.

“Heck yeah,” he said. “The Duck Dynasty folks represent a lot of the folks who hunt and fish and who are Christians in the panhandle. That family and that program represent a way of life we see here.”

Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council, said the government union wants to shut down free speech.

“Could you imagine if someone demanded someone take an Obama bumper sticker off because President Obama is intolerant to orthodox Christian views?” Perkins asked. “Where does this stop?”

He said their attack on the two Duck Dynasty fans is an example of the Left’s intimidation and intolerance.

“They do not want anyone to have a choice to express themselves in a way that counters their own viewpoint and that’s very dangerous to our republic,” Perkins said. “This goes back to the underlying emphasis and goal—not to debate the merits of whether someone is right or not. It’s to shut down the debate. End of story. No discussion.”

For now—the jobs of the two Duck Dynasty fans are safe. It’s unclear at this point what the union’s next step might be. But they should heed this warning. I’m going to be keeping my eye on the American Government Employees Union. And should they try to retaliate against these brave Americans, it’ll be on

like Donkey Kong. And that's a fact, Jack.

Todd Starnes *is host of Fox News & Commentary, heard on hundreds of radio stations. Sign up for his American Dispatch newsletter, be sure to join his Facebook page, and follow him on Twitter. His latest book is God Less America.*