



DOC Proposed Social Media and Web 2.0 Policy Violates Constitutional Rights of Free Speech

Policy Does Not Apply to NWSEO Unit Employees - Bargaining Obligations Were Not Met

(February 4, 2011) NWSEO informed the National Weather Service that implementation of the Department of Commerce's policy on Social Media and Web 2.0 violates the constitutional right of free speech. NWSEO cautioned the NWS that the union will take legal action to prohibit the policy, if necessary. NWSEO General Counsel Richard Hirn says that under the proposal employees would need agency review and permission to discuss anything about their job or DOC on Facebook or other social media, even in their own personal capacity.

"This is a really big deal. Basically, under the policy, you can't even mention your job to family or friends on any form of social media," said Hirn.

"It could be interpreted by some as trying to silence people who have an opinion on climate and weather issues that may be counter to the agency or the administration in power at the time," said NWSEO President Dan Sobien.

On January 26, DOC employees were informed by email that the Social Media policy had been implemented and that the restrictions contained in the policy applies to them. The email went out prior to the NWS's notification to NWSEO about the policy. The proposed policy was sent to the union on Wednesday, February 2 for review and requires NWSEO approval before implementation. NWSEO is asking NWS to send an email to all employees informing them to disregard the policy because it currently does not apply to them.

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