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## A Costly Thanksgiving Message

Just before last Thanksgiving, Walter Kehowski decided to share some wishes with his colleagues at Glendale Community College. The tenured mathematics professor used a faculty announcement e-mail list to send George Washington's Thanksgiving Proclamation of 1789. [The e-mail that Kehowski sent](#) also indicated his source: the blog of Pat Buchanan.

That e-mail could end up costing Kehowski his job, according to documents released Monday by the [Foundation for Individual Rights in Education](#), which is now advising Kehowski. According to those documents, five employees in the Maricopa Community College District — of which Glendale is a part — filed complaints against him, charging that including a link to Buchanan's Web site (even citing it as the source for the proclamation) was harassment because of the anti-immigration views expressed by Buchanan on his Web site.

Kehowski has been placed on leave and his termination has been recommended to the Maricopa board — although the professor is asserting his right to appeal that recommendation. The charges on which he was found guilty with regard to the George Washington e-mail include violating the district's equal opportunity policy and breaking a rule against posting non-work related items on the announcements e-mail list.

Chris Chesrown, a spokeswoman for the Maricopa district, said that it was the official policy not to comment on personnel matters. She said that the information posted on the FIRE Web site — which includes copies of numerous letters and e-mail exchanges — is “inaccurate and incomplete.” However, she declined to specify how that was the case. She confirmed that Kehowski is on leave, and said he would receive due process.

Greg Lukianoff, president of FIRE, said that all the relevant documents have now been made public. He also said it was “particularly cowardly” for the college to question the accuracy of the material his group has released, without saying how it was inaccurate.

Lukianoff said that it would not raise First Amendment issues for a college to restrict an e-mail list to work-related material in a way that would exclude postings like the Thanksgiving message. But he said that the same listserv for which the Thanksgiving posting is being punished had previously included postings on topics that included an advertisement for purchasing goats for orphans in Uganda, quotes about Women's History Month, and a discussion of the health benefits of eating bananas.

Clearly, Lukianoff said, enforcement is selective, and that demonstrates that Kehowski's free speech rights are being violated. And then there is the punishment, he said. “This is extreme punishment,” he said. “This is

a tenured professor being terminated.”

— [Scott Jaschik](#)

*The original story and user comments can be viewed online at  
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