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Colonel Rick Fuentes, Superintendent
New Jersey State Police
P.O. Box 7068
West Trenton, NJ 08628

RE: Statehouse Policies Regarding Free Expression on Clothing

Dear Superintendent Fuentes:

The American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey has received complaints that visitors to the statehouse have been denied access to the building by state police troopers until they removed politically expressive pins, buttons, or stickers from their clothing. In some cases, visitors were required to leave their buttons at security and instructed to collect them upon exiting the statehouse.

We have serious concerns that this practice infringes on the rights of citizens to express themselves that are protected by the United States Constitution as well as the New Jersey State Constitution. In the matters at hand, the buttons and stickers were worn by visitors as a means of protected political expression. The complaints we received came from citizens who visited the statehouse to engage in the political process on specific issues of public concern, and wore buttons or stickers that expressed their viewpoints.

Pursuant to the Open Public Records Act, I request that your office provide me with any relevant policy or procedures on the subject of restricting access to people wearing buttons, pins or stickers.

If it is not the policy of the State Police to limit a citizen's right to express themselves on their clothing, I request that you

- 1) Issue a clear policy statement and complete a training protocol to ensure that all Statehouse personnel are aware that they may not limit such expressions in the Statehouse; and
- 2) Post a statement of policy at the Statehouse and Annex security stations that informs citizens of their right to such free expression in the Statehouse.

Thank you in advance for ensuring that we receive the documents requested within the seven-day period set forth in the Open Public Records Act. If you would like to meet to discuss model free speech policies, I would be more than glad to do so.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,


Jeanne LoCicero *AL*
Deputy Legal Director