

## Suit ties college firing to politics

A former Front Range Community College aide cites his conservative views and criticism of Islam. Officials deny violating his rights.

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A Westminster college employee who questioned a course on Islam and hung a poster showing a Russian baby murdered by Muslim terrorists alleges in a lawsuit that he was fired for expressing conservative views.

Anson Rohr, terminated from his administrative assistant job at Front Range Community College in January, says his poster was no more offensive than pictures of the Holocaust or the war in Iraq displayed by other employees.

"He was the token campus conservative among a sea of very liberal political thinkers," said Todd McNamara, Rohr's attorney. "He paid the price for his political viewpoints."

But college administrators said Rohr was fired for e-mailing the religion class professor excessively, surfing the Internet and hanging up on an administrator who told him to take down his poster.

College president Karen Reinertson said freedom of speech was not violated.

"It's not a limitless right, and it is bounded by other people's rights," she said, adding that she has to ensure the campus is "not hostile and people don't have to feel afraid or uncomfortable."

Rohr, 50, was hired to do secretarial work for instructors, not tell them how to teach, she said.

"It was not Anson's job to educate people about anything, foreign wars or anything else," the president said.

In a lawsuit filed Friday, Rohr said he wants his job back, plus lost wages and an unspecified amount of compensatory damages for mental anguish.

Rohr, whose job reviews were positive, said he was concerned students learned a limited view of Islam and e-mailed the professor in November.

Then Rohr hung a poster near his cubicle showing a man carrying a dead child from a school in Beslan, Russia, after a terrorist siege. The caption said, "One of over a hundred children murdered by Muslim terrorists in Beslan, Russia, September 2004."

Rohr, a conservative blogger who wrote a letter to the editor saying Beslan provided justification to torture terrorists, said faculty with "far left" ideas "felt no shyness" about sharing them. He said he put up with T-shirt slogans and jokes criticizing President Bush.

A co-worker complained about his poster to vice president Andrew Dorsey and dean Therese Brown, who called and ordered Rohr to remove it.

"Brown began to berate Rohr about removing the picture, and each time Rohr attempted to tell her that he believed he had rights, Brown only raised her voice," the lawsuit says. "When Rohr realized that he was not going to be able to speak rationally with Brown, he simply hung up the telephone."

College administrators put Rohr on leave, saying his behavior "caused other employees to feel threatened and to fear for their safety."

He was fired Jan. 10.

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