

BARRY LOUDERMILK
11TH DISTRICT, GEORGIA

HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE

SCIENCE, SPACE, AND
TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

- CHAIRMAN OF SUBCOMMITTEE
ON OVERSIGHT

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1011

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February 10, 2015

The Honorable Kasim Reed
Mayor of Atlanta
Office of Communications
55 Trinity Avenue, Suite 2500
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Dear Mayor Reed:

As Members of Congress representing the state of Georgia, we write to express our concern about the recent termination of Chief Kelvin Cochran of the Atlanta Fire Rescue Department on January 6, 2015.

Chief Cochran's termination appears to have occurred because he wrote a 160 page book for his bible study in which one and a half pages describe his Christian beliefs regarding proper sexual ethics. Despite writing the book on his own time, Chief Cochran has been accused of engaging in "discrimination" for merely expressing his religious beliefs.


Chief Cochran's book was published over a year ago, and there is no evidence that Chief Cochran has ever discriminated against or been the subject of any complaints of discrimination while serving in the Atlanta Fire Rescue Department.

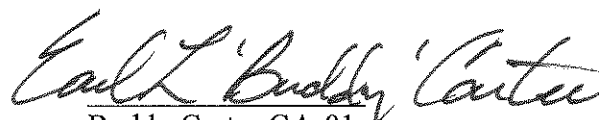
Your action against Chief Cochran appears to violate fundamental principles of free speech and religious freedom. Chief Cochran relied upon religious text from the Bible to express his opinions in his personal writings. The only way Chief Cochran could avoid his views would be to disown his religion. Indeed, in terminating him, the City of Atlanta itself engaged in an act of discrimination, and worse, did so on the basis of his religious beliefs.

As fellow Georgians, we are extremely troubled that a capable and long-standing public servant in our state can be targeted for retaliation and dismissal solely because of his religious views. Chief Cochran's views did not harm his ability to carry out his duties at the Atlanta Fire Rescue Department, and thus his speech should have been protected.

Chief Cochran notes that the city justified his termination on the grounds of "tolerance" and "inclusion" yet asks, "What could be more intolerant and exclusionary than ending a public servant's 30 years of distinguished service for his religious beliefs?" We agree and respectfully ask that you reconsider your decision to terminate Chief Cochran, and reinstate him in his position.

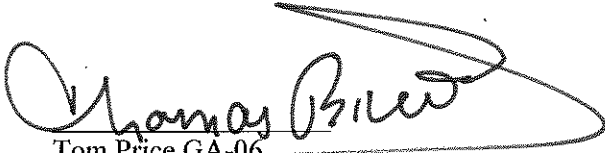
Sincerely,


Barry Loudermilk GA-11
Member of Congress

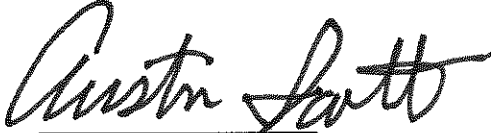

Buddy Carter GA-01
Member of Congress



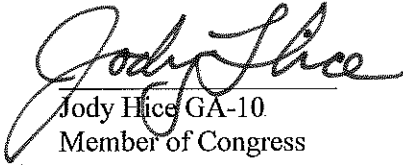
Lynn Westmoreland GA-03
Member of Congress



Tom Price GA-06
Member of Congress



Austin Scott GA-08
Member of Congress



Jody Hice GA-10
Member of Congress