

Northern Virginia woman fired from job after giving Trump motorcade the middle finger

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Last week, Juli Briskman, a resident of Washington, D.C.'s Northern Virginia suburbs, was photographed giving the middle finger to Donald Trump's presidential motorcade as it passed by her en route to the Republican president's nearby golf course in Sterling, Virginia.

A picture of the incident, taken by photographer Brendan Smialowski for Getty Images, soon went viral on social media.

Though Briskman's face is not visible in the photo, the mother-of-two decided on October 31 to inform her employers at the Herndon, Virginia-based government contracting firm Akima that she had been photographed making the gesture. Briskman had made the gesture on her off day, and her attire bore no markings connecting her to the company.

While the incident could have remained discretely separate from her work life with the confidence of her bosses, Akima executives responded by accusing Briskman of violating the company's code-of-conduct, then "took her into a room and fired her... [and escorted] her out of the building with a box of her things," reports the *Washington Post*.

According to the company, Briskman had violated behavior standards which "covered Social Media Activity that contains discriminatory, obscene malicious or threatening content," which "is knowingly false, create [sic] a hostile work environment, or... [is] unlawful."

Far from being fired for an offensive gesture, it is more likely that Briskman's firing was politically motivated.

According to the *Post*, earlier this year Briskman, who had served as head of Akima's social media work, had cited a senior director at the firm for making disparaging Facebook comments against the protest

group Black Lives Matter and referring to an employee as "a f-ing Libtard a-hole" while on a company-linked account. The director responsible for the comment had not been fired.

Briskman has reportedly contacted the American Civil Liberties Union to appeal her firing.

Virginia, a "Right to Work" state which imposes significant hurdles before employees seeking to defend themselves against unjust firings and hostile work environments, is a major economic hub for private companies seeking to perform contract work for the Federal government, often with a workforce receiving significantly less pay than their federal counterparts.

"My finger said what I was feeling," Briskman told CNN. "I'm angry and I'm frustrated."

In an account of her reasons for making the gesture, Briskman, who had protested at Trump's inauguration, stated to the *Post* that she had been "imagining the devastation in Puerto Rico, furious that young immigrants brought to the United States as children could be deported, despondent over the deaths and devastation in Las Vegas."

"Here's what was going through my head that day: 'Really? You're golfing again?'" she added.



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