

February 16, 2017

Official complaint regarding current Clark County Sheriff's Office (CCSO)
Undersheriff Mike Cooke.

RCW 42.52.180, Use of public resources for political campaigns.

While working as the Drug Task Force Commander for Clark County then Commander Mike Cooke, now Undersheriff Mike Cooke, violated numerous CCSO policies, Clark County HR policies, and various State laws regarding campaigning and political activities on duty as a law enforcement official. He assisted a retired law enforcement official, Chuck Atkins (a civilian), run for Sheriff of Clark County, and elected position. Chuck Atkins won the election and promoted then Commander Cooke to Undersheriff Cooke per his already pre-stated campaign promises. While this agency does not investigate allegations of department policy or county policy I wish to make it clear that it is applicable in the context of these numerous violations. I do expect that this agency simply follow what they are required to and in no way is there an expectation that will assist with any policy violation inquires outside of it's jurisdiction. The following narrative will outline these alleged violations:

The existing Sheriff, Garry Lucas, had announced that he would not be running for another term as Sheriff and would be retiring at the end of the current term. Sheriff Lucas' current serving Undersheriff and Chief Criminal deputy also stated they would all retire together. This group were the top three in the existing rank structure.

Early in 2014 Mike Cooke began to openly assist Chuck Atkins as a candidate for Sheriff of Clark County. Per the existing website www.atkinsforsheriff.com the campaign commenced in December of 2013 and Mike Cooke endorsed Chuck Atkins openly on April 8th 2014 per the "Atkins for Sheriff" campaign. It is in this endorsement that Mike Cooke is self titled as "campaign communications manager." See below the quote copy and pasted directly from the website (Screen shots will be attached to complaint.)

"It appears that Chuck Atkins has very strong support from law enforcement in Clark County," said campaign communications manager Mike Cooke, himself a 25 year law enforcement veteran. "I admit I'm biased, but I'm just not hearing of police officers supporting anyone other than Chuck."

As the election was in full swing, Mike Cooke, had officially named himself a member of the "Atkins for Sheriff" campaign. It was not long after this that Chuck Atkins had only made one promise openly and that was, if elected, make Mike Cooke his Undersheriff. This began a myriad of violations of political activities on duty. Mike

Cooke was the Drug Task Force (DTF) Commander and had approximately 11 subordinates under his supervision. This consisted of civilian support and legal secretary, non-sworn financial investigators, as well as fully sworn law enforcement detectives. I, Scott Holmes, was one of the assigned detectives.

Mike Cooke, for approximately 6 months, routinely used the DTF offices and assigned undercover vehicles while on duty to transport and store various campaign items. These items included "Atkins for Sheriff" mugs, door hangers, pamphlets, t-shirts, bumper stickers, and signs. I personally saw several of these items taken out of Mike Cooke's assigned vehicle in the parking lot of DTF on duty. Mike Cooke also collected money donations in both cash and personal check for the "Atkins for Sheriff" campaign at the office. The items listed above were distributed routinely. They are pictured below and included with the complaint. The pictures were taken directly off the "Atkins for Sheriff" Facebook page in which they published themselves. Any number of these pictured items can easily be collected as physical evidence upon request.

The items were kept in his office as well as distributed during work related meetings. These meetings were meant for investigative purposes and official duty. Every Tuesday morning an official work meeting occurred in which all members of the entire DTF would meet in the main conference room. Meetings would consist of any and all work related matters regarding investigations, informants, search warrants, and attempting to schedule the week's work flow for the entire DTF. These work meetings would sometimes be less than 30 minutes but could last up to over an hour depending on the various investigations being planned and discussed.

These meetings, almost always attended by Mike Cooke, would eventually turn into long discussions of the current campaign. Mike Cooke would often have various campaign items at these meetings for the employees to take for free. He would openly discuss various campaign events that had occurred over the weekend or events that were coming up. These meetings that eventually turned into long-winded conversations would sometimes last up to an hour, all about the campaign, with all of us sitting at the large conference table. These long discussions about the campaign would occur weekly from early April to the first week of November after Chuck Atkins was elected, approximately 7 to 8 months.

We will, of course, let the State agency responsible for the investigations to come up with their own numbers but I will include an example of tax payer money used in violation of state laws by Mike Cooke.

The pay scale for the various employees would range roughly between \$25.00/hr to \$40/hr per their respective bargaining unit contract. We will use an average of \$32.50 an hour. Using an average of 30 minutes a week from April to November if all 11 employees were present and forced to sit and listen to Mike Cooke the cost of tax dollars wasted would be approximately \$357.50 in money and time that could

have been directed at doing official work. There are approximately 30 Tuesdays between the first week of April and the first week of November. \$357.50 times 30 Tuesdays equals \$10,725.00 in money and time that could have been directed at doing official work investigating serious crimes against the citizens of Clark County. These are very conservative numbers. This does not account for the mileage and gas Mike Cooke used while operating his official work vehicle. Nor does it account for the unknown number of hours during these several months that Mike Cooke did personal campaigning and phone calls on his work time. I have been approached by several law enforcement persons who stated they observed him directly conduct political activities on duty. Some of these conversations on the phone would be up to an hour while then Commander Cooke was assisting in conducting surveillance and/or waiting for search warrants to be approved. All of this while on duty in his primary role as the DTF Commander.

I know that others felt uncomfortable that the amount of campaign items at the DTF office were increasing as well as some of the long winded discussions regarding the campaign. Mike Cooke was an effective Commander getting things done and had a very bulldog attitude. He made it clear several times at DTF that he did what he wanted and he didn't wait for other agencies, especially the Feds, to dictate to us what investigations were more critical than others. He made it clear several times that these other agencies, including the Feds, "...they need us more than we need them." This bully mentality permeated the DTF and ironically got things done as we did not wait around for others. But what this bully mentality also did was to create a culture of fear to speak against the Commander. Chuck Atkins was already getting very widespread support and distancing himself from his weaker opponents. Although many knew that Election Day was the ultimate deciding factor, many felt strongly that Chuck Atkins would win. With the support for Chuck Atkins increasing, the belief that the now Commander would soon be the Undersheriff made it harder not to speak against him. When handed an "Atkins for Sheriff" mug by Mike Cooke it was hard not to take it. This was reinforced time and time again by the vehement attacks against Chuck Atkins opponent Sgt. Shane Gardner, a current employee of the Sherriff's Office.

Anybody that supported Sgt. Gardner was shunned and ridiculed. Mike Cooke routinely verbally attacked Sgt. Gardner at every opportunity. Sgt. Gardner was a very effective employee with no discipline, a former Army Ranger who served in Panama, and also a citizen of Clark County who had every legal right to run for Sheriff. It was overwhelming the amount of verbal attacks that many made against Sgt. Gardner, mostly led by Mike Cooke. Sgt. Gardner did end up losing the election even with over 44 percent of the vote.

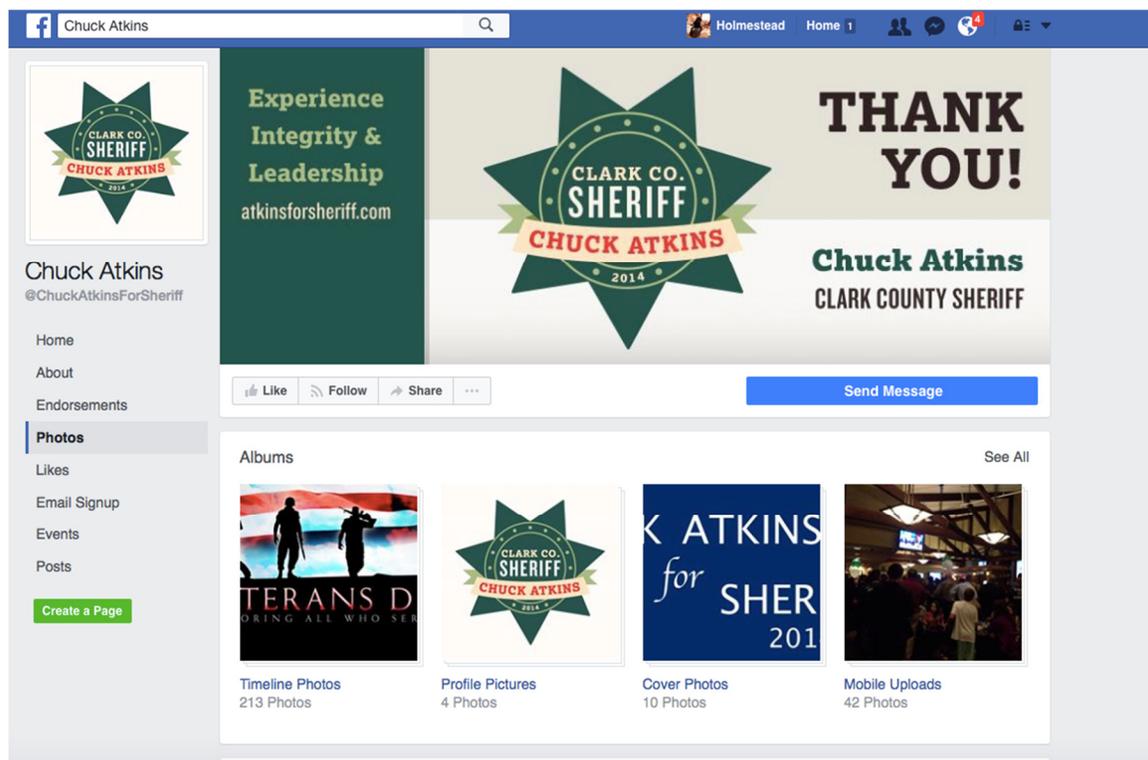
These actions by then Commander Mike Cooke and now current Undersheriff Mike Cooke continue to increase the level of fear in others. This fear makes employees not want to speak out. This is why it has taken so long for this complaint to be initiated. Brave and hard working law enforcement officers are still currently working for CCSO and fear persecution from their own superiors more than they

fear actions of criminals on the street. I have been empowered with the statements of others to initiate with complaint. With this complaint and further investigation by this agency these others will see that a neutral third party is involved. The reputations and credibility of the DTF employees exposed to these violations are beyond reproach. They have been involved in hundreds upon hundreds of search warrants, police reports, and testimony in both state and federal court. They will not lie, or allow others to lie when asked questions. Knowing that potentially up to 11 persons or more will be asked the same questions will further embolden them to be honest and not let the fear of a superior waver their responses. It is unknown, and most unlikely, that current Sheriff Chuck Atkins was even aware of these actions by then Commander Mike Cooke. Per the Sheriff's own code of ethics published on his Sheriff's website these actions are not aligned with his beliefs.

We formally request a full investigation regarding this matter. I have spoken with your agency prior regarding the matter and was directed to file a complaint if I believe an allegation has occurred. Your office directed me towards that applicable RCW's that show that Mike Cooke's violations clearly meet the elements of the offense as defined by the legislature. Please do not hesitate to contact us through me.

Regards,

Scott Holmes



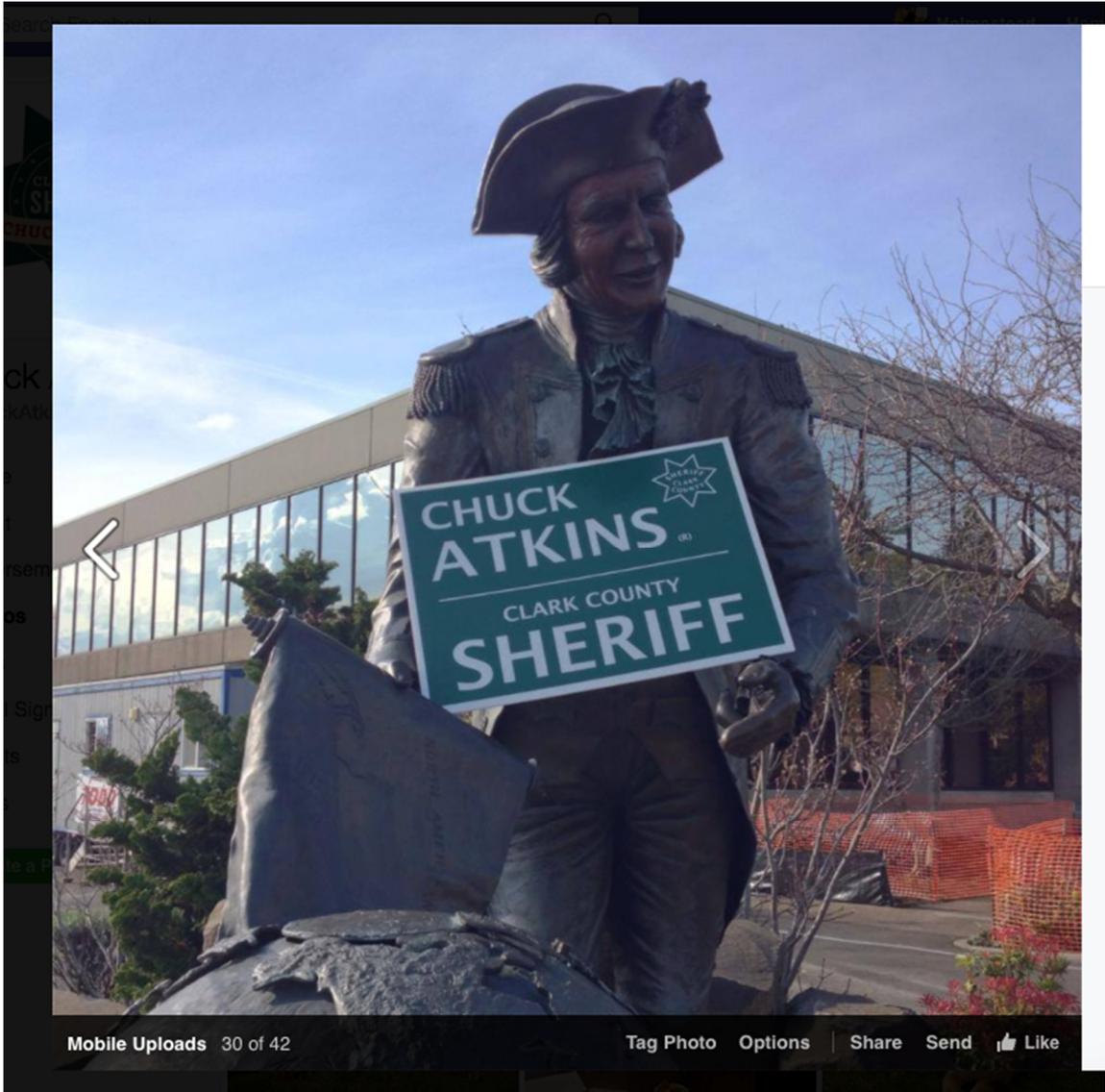






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April 8, 2014

The Chuck Atkins for Sheriff campaign is pleased to announce that over 100 police officers, deputy sheriffs, corrections deputies, and civilian law enforcement staff have endorsed Chuck Atkins for Clark County Sheriff. This outpouring of support ahead of the official filing date for candidacy points to widespread law enforcement support for Chuck Atkins.

“I’m so humbled by the support these public safety heroes have shown by endorsing me so early for Clark County Sheriff,” said Atkins. “With this many law enforcement endorsements coming so early, it’s becoming clear that I’m the law enforcement choice to be the next Sheriff.”

These endorsements are significant because public safety officers know what it takes to be the leader of a law enforcement agency and they know what it takes to keep the community safe. A candidate that can’t deliver on both of these core requirements is not going to get their support.

“It appears that Chuck Atkins has very strong support from law enforcement in Clark County,” said campaign communications manager Mike Cooke, himself a 25 year law enforcement veteran. “I admit I’m biased, but I’m just not hearing of police officers supporting anyone other than Chuck.”

Chuck Atkins retired after 35 years of service with the Clark County Sheriff’s Office so he could run for Clark County Sheriff. Chuck Atkins is a graduate of the FBI National Academy executive leadership program. He was personally awarded a citation for law enforcement excellence by President Bill Clinton. Chuck believes that experience, integrity, and leadership are the qualities that make him the strongest candidate for Clark County Sheriff.



News

Protecting our vulnerable elders

/ March 1, 2014

If you've been following my blog, you know how much value I place on community partnerships. Law enforcement, working alone, simply can not be the sole solution to the problems facing our community. One of the major issues facing our... [View Article](#)

My Political Pledges

/ December 29, 2013

As we head into the new year many of us will be making our New Year's resolutions. Of course my mind has been focused on the campaign and the upcoming discussions we'll be having on the issues. Unlike a New... [View Article](#)

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Endorsements

Chuck has garnered the support of many organizations and the vast majority of local Law Enforcement as well as a growing number of individual endorsements.

[Click here to see more.](#)

Organizations

Washington State Narcotics
Investigators Association

Clark County Sheriff Commander's
Guild

Vancouver Police Department
Command Unit

La Center Police Officer's Guild

Clark County Deputy Sheriff's Guild

Vancouver Police Officer's Guild

Camas Police Officers Guild

Northwest Organized Retail Crime
Alliance