

Political Debates in the Workplace: Where to Draw the Line

News

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Todd Fredrickson was quoted in *SHRM* on May 12, 2015. The article “Political Debates in the Workplace: Where to Draw the Line” discussed how to manage political chatter in the workplace.

Social media and the 24-hour cable news cycle keep controversial matters constantly in the public dialogue, noted Todd. So it’s understandable that the talk would spill over into the workplace, he said.

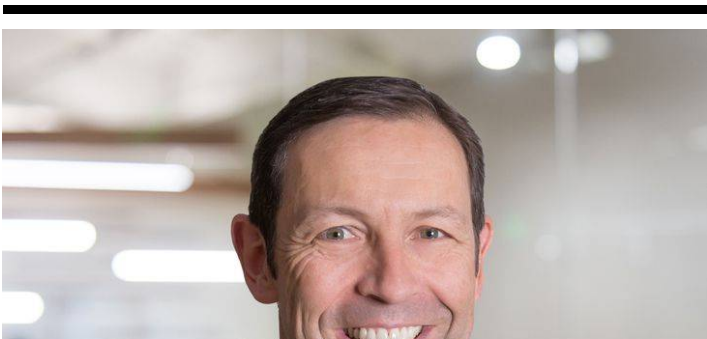
For example, conversations about the April 2015 riots in Baltimore might turn into a testy debate about how far police should go in using force. An employee who remarks about the outfit she bought for her son’s same-sex wedding could provoke a co-worker’s objections to gay marriage, or even an accusation that the subject offended someone’s religious beliefs. And that’s when things can start bleeding into a legal territory that can put employers at risk, Todd said. “A [political] conversation can morph into something that is actual harassment” of someone who’s a member of a protected legal class, he said.

Set the tone from the top by making sure managers respect the views of others. Todd recalled one case in which a Colorado employer, angry that some of his workers were canvassing for a candidate who belonged to a party he opposed, retaliated by giving the workers fewer sales leads. “That’s illegal in Colorado,” he said.

To read the full article, please visit [SHRM](#).

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