

## For ACLU of Montana, 2017

### PRESS RELEASE For Immediate Release

#### Air Force veteran racially profiled and interrogated at Great Falls CVS

**Great Falls, Mont.**—Evalyna Little Young Man and her four adopted special needs children must make routine trips to their local CVS drug store. Little Young Man figured she was recognized as a regular customer. Then on July 1, 2016, store employees revealed it wasn't her familiar face but the color of Little Young Man's skin that made her stand out.

When Little Young Man entered the store, she was falsely accused of shoplifting because she's a Native American.

"When I denied the allegations, I was then interrogated about who else might have stolen some items, as if I would have somehow known who had taken them," recalls Little Young Man. The enrolled member of the Blackfeet Tribe was honorably discharged from the Air Force after 20 years of service and is married to a Cascade County deputy sheriff.

"I was told by the CVS employee that they were watching me because I am Native American," says Little Young Man. "One employee said they were on the lookout for Native American shoplifters."

Upset by the false accusation and assumption that she might know the identities of shoplifters because of her race, Little Young Man left the store.

"This conduct by the CVS employees deeply disturbed me. It felt like discriminatory harassment, like I was unwelcome and because of that I became too emotional to complete my purchases," remembers Little Young Man.

Little Young Man later contacted the ACLU of Montana, who helped her file a complaint with the Montana Human Rights Commission.

"What the CVS employees did is against the law," explains ACLU of Montana Executive Director Caitlin Borgmann. "It violated the company's own internal loss policies and the discrimination ultimately denied Little Young Man the right to shop in a public place."

Little Young Man hopes others in Montana will avoid such treatment at CVS in the future. That's why her complaint seeks a written apology, implicit bias training instituted at all CVS stores across the state and nominal monetary damages and attorney fees.

"Popping into the drug store to pick up necessities is something we all have to do," says Borgmann. "Evalyna does it for herself, her husband and their four adopted children. We hope her complaint to the Montana Human Rights Commission will make it so the next time she walks in, she's recognized as a valued customer and not an instant suspect just because she happens to be Native American."

INSERT STATS: Number of similar complaints filed along with other stats showing this event is not an isolated incident. Also helpful to have statistical or other tangible evidence that implicit bias training works.

INSERT CONTACTS: To set up interviews with Evalyna Little Young Man, Executive Director Caitlin Borgmann and other ACLU of Montana staff, please contact Communications Strategist David Madison. INSERT CONTACT INFO.

#### TWO-WEEK COMMUNICATIONS PLAN BACKING HB 59

**Strategy:** Build support for HB 59 by re-framing the conversation away from "but law enforcement is just doing its job" to one emphasizing two main points:

1. Profiling actually makes Montanans less safe because it distracts law enforcement away from those actually committing crimes.
2. We don't know the extent of profiling in Montana and if race is just one factor. Might others be targeted because their appearance shows them to be gun owners, members of a

certain religious group, supportive of controversial political causes or something else that draws unwanted attention from law enforcement?

**Tactics:** Recruit, train and deploy spokespersons previously unaffiliated with the ACLU of Montana. These spokespersons are selected from the home districts of key supporters and powerful opponents of HB 59.

The trained spokespersons promote HB 59 through short web videos, Facebook/Twitter postings, LTEs and guest opinions. They cheer on proponents like Rep. Meg Singer and offer effective criticisms of opponents because they come from the same general political place as those opposed.

**JAN 13:** Launch web video titled “Driving while a gun owner.” We see a patrol car stop a pickup with a gun rack in the rear window.

Video script TBD based on internal input from ACLU of Montana and other supporters. The ACLU of Montana logo appears at the end of the video, which is cut into shorter versions for release on Facebook and Twitter.

This campaign uses video content to spearhead an earned media push by making trained spokespersons available for interviews. LTEs, guest opinions and shared social media postings drive home this key point: We don’t know exactly who’s being profiled in Montana because we’re not keeping track.

**JAN. 14:** All of this builds up to the first committee hearing, so efforts focus on media in and affecting the home districts of key committee members.

**JAN. 15:** HB 59 passes out of committee. The ACLU of Montana joins spokespersons who’ve been profiled and other supporters on the steps of the Montana Capitol for a press conference. The news: Not only is HB 59 gaining support among lawmakers, it’s also won the endorsement of citizen groups, shooting clubs and other freedom loving Montanans. Those include racial minorities, who now pivot more directly into the spotlight of the media push around HB 59.

**JAN. 16-19:** Second short advocacy video is released. This time it’s a collection of straightforward testimonials to camera: a retired law enforcement officer, an avid hunter and people of color who’ve been profiled describe how:

- The problem is real and HB 59 fixes the problem by gathering more information about who’s being profiled.
- It empowers the Montana Attorney General to analyze a wider sample of profiling data and paint an accurate picture of what’s really happening year by year.
- It creates a series of carrots and sticks to motivate departments with high rates of profiling to improve their policies and procedures or suffer funding cuts.
- It helps improve relationships between local communities and law enforcement by setting up formal police-community partnerships.

The video is the lead tool in a final “contact your legislator” effort on social media leading up to a House floor vote.

**JAN. 20:** Spokespersons stage a sample community meeting at the Montana Capitol to show reporters and legislators what one of these partnerships will look like. Again, this is a chance to make all kinds of Montanans the face of this issue, not paid staffers with the ACLU of Montana and other advocacy groups often dismissed by many lawmakers.

**JAN. 21:** Bill passes. ACLU of Montana staffers join spokespersons in press release congratulating legislators.

**JAN. 22-24:** ACLU of Montana and spokespersons push out “thank you” guest opinions, LTEs and social media posts. ACLU of Montana and spokespersons also stand ready to respond to any backlash from law enforcement or other groups upset by the passage of HB 59. This effort provides political cover to any legislator backing the bill and invested in its future success.