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A Guy In A Trump Shirt Carried A Gun Outside Of A Virginia Polling Place. Authorities Say That's Fine.

The incident happened in the wealthiest county in America.



By Ryan J. Reilly



COURTESY ERIKA M COTTI

A man carrying a weapon outside of Loudoun County Registrars Office in Leesburg, Virginia.

WASHINGTON — A man wearing a [Donald Trump](#) shirt and carrying a weapon stood outside a voting location in Loudoun County, Virginia, on Friday. Authorities in the nation's richest county are apparently OK with that.

Erika Cotti encountered the man when she went to vote at the county's registrar's office, she told The Huffington Post. Virginia doesn't have early voting per se, but voters can cast in-person absentee ballots for a [host of reasons](#), like if they're going to be out of the county or city on Election Day.

"I had my 9-year-old son with me. I felt intimidated," Cotti said. "And I had to explain to my 9-year-old why a man with a 357 magnum is standing outside the polling station."

Cotti said the man offered her a Republican sample ballot, which she declined.

"He's like, 'Who are you going to vote for, crooked Hillary?'" And I was like, that's really none of your business," Cotti said, adding that the man was standing in the sidewalk outside of the office when they left and blocking their path.

Judy Brown, Loudoun County registrar, confirmed that the man was standing outside her office in Leesburg and handing out GOP literature.

"There is a gentleman standing outside the office with a holstered gun," Brown told HuffPost. "According to law enforcement, because Virginia is open carry, he's allowed to have it."

Brown noted that the man was "being nice" to people, and that he appeared to respecting the observed [40-foot no-canvassing zone](#) outside of the entrance.

"They said that there's nothing they could do, that he was well within his rights to be carrying his weapon," Brown said.



Brown said her office contacted the local Republican Party, which got the man to agree to pull his Trump shirt over the weapon so people couldn't see it. "Hopefully nobody else will be concerned about him," Brown said.

Loudoun County Republican Committee Chairman Will Estrada told HuffPost that the man was a former law enforcement official and veteran with a concealed carry permit.

"We don't want to startle anyone," Estrada said he told him. "He felt really bad, he pulled his T-shirt over it, and I think everyone was fine after that."

Estrada said he doesn't want to specifically ban his volunteers from carrying weapons.

"It's a free country," Estrada said. "I'm a NRA life member myself. So long as no laws are being broken, I'm not going to tell someone they can't. But I've told all of our volunteers that we're here for our candidates, we don't want us to become the story."

Conservative media outlets and Republicans in Washington spent significant time and resources attacking the Obama administration because they disagreed with the Justice Department's handling 2008 incident in which a man stood outside a polling place in Philadelphia holding a nightstick. The man who promoted a video of the incident is Mike Roman, who has reportedly been working on election protection efforts in connection with the Trump campaign.

Friday's incident in Loudoun County, involving a white Republican, seems pretty unlikely to attract the same type of attention.

Cotti is a politically active resident who was quoted in a Washington Post story last year about political dysfunction in Loudoun. She said she didn't think the man's conduct should be allowed.

"We're an open carry state, I get that. But he's wearing a huge Trump T-shirt, he has a huge gun, and he was obstructing my exit on public property," Cotti said, "That's insane to me."