

Attorney Advises Ex-Employee Who Shut Down Trump's Twitter to Lawyer Up



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Summary: Could the employee who temporarily suspended Donald Trump's Twitter account be arrested for hacking?

On Thursday, Donald Trump's personal Twitter account was shut down for 11 minutes by a rogue customer service employee. The move was derided by Trump supporters and celebrated by his haters, but regardless of personal feelings, one attorney warned *The Hill* that the person responsible should proceed with caution.

"Don't say anything and get a lawyer," Tor Ekeland said.

Shortly after the suspension, Twitter announced that a customer service employee closed Trump's account on his or her last day, and the announcement brought glee to the anti-Trump camp, who tweeted praise and jokes for their fellow comrade. However, Ekeland warned that people may have celebrated too soon. The worker may have violated the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act, which has the primary purpose of prosecuting hackers.

The broadly-written law stated that any unauthorized use of a "protected" computer system is unlawful. Ekeland said that the act is widely panned for being a "mess," but it exists, nonetheless.

"If this happened in California, where Twitter is headquartered if they were no longer an employee at the time — particularly if their employment had been terminated — or if they had not been authorized to suspend or delete accounts, they could have broken the law," said Ekeland.

The Ninth Circuit court of California previously ruled that employees who have been explicitly told they do not have permission to access a system but does anyway is breaking the law. In contrast, the same court ruled that employees are not violating the law if they exceed workplace computer policies. Thus, the Twitter employee who shut down Trump's account could face trouble depending on what Twitter's policies were.

Ekeland told *The Hill* that if the employee was tasked to monitor accounts and was allowed to suspend or remove them, then he or she was not breaking the law by suspending Trump's. However, if the employee was no longer working at Twitter and messed with Trump's account, then they could be in trouble, especially if they caused any damages over \$5,000.

Considering the power of Trump's Twitter, Ekeland said the damage amount could be proven and the employee could face time in prison and a civil lawsuit.

The important of Trump's account

Trump's account @realDonaldTrump may have only been suspended for 11 minutes, but it is worth noting how important it is. President Trump notoriously hates the mainstream media, and he uses his Twitter to post White House news and national events directly to his followers.

Trump's account is so important that [The Knight Institute filed a lawsuit](#) against him for blocking people from seeing his tweets. The Knight Institute argued that Trump and other political figures use their social media accounts as town halls and thus could not exclude participants under the First Amendment.

How safe is Twitter from internal hacking?

Whatever happens to the employee, the deactivation also raises the question of how safe is Twitter? *The Verge* stated that rogue employees are actually a known problem at the tech company, and other non-publicized but similar cases have already occurred. According to the publication, Twitter has broad customer service tools which allow numerous people to access user accounts. These tools allow deletion, suspension, and verification.

After the infamous Trump account suspension, Twitter held a company meeting to address abuses of power and keeping the service

safe. Protecting accounts has been a long-standing problem, according to *The Verge*, and the employee who deactivated Trump's account was reportedly a third-party contractor.

According to ex-employees, many of these third-party contractors are located overseas, and one person told *The Verge* that Twitter's security problem could lead to a disaster.

"It gets really chilling when you think about, what if a state is able to recruit somebody as an asset internally, and then go in and shut down accounts at a really key time?" one former employee said. "Or is able to obtain some sort of information about that account? There's lots of really bad, bad versions of this that could play out."

- [Trump's Blocked Twitter Users File First Amendment Lawsuit](#)
- [Senate Intelligence Committee Grills Twitter, Facebook and Google About Role in Russian Election Interference](#)

What do you think of what happened to Trump's Twitter account? Let us know in the comments below.

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