

Montpelier, Vt. - Governor Phil Scott's Communications Director Rebecca Kelley today issued the following statement in response to the ACLU's questions regarding a social media policy designed to foster civility and protect users from abuse on the Governor's Facebook page:

"As a public servant, Governor Scott has worked to emphasize the urgent need to increase respect and civility in our public discourse, even when we disagree. His Facebook page is a place where all constituents, of all ages, should feel comfortable visiting, posting and engaging. We agree with the ACLU that the Governor's page is a public forum, which is why feedback, including criticism, dissent and frustration is welcome. We understand and respect the need for the expression of all viewpoints.

"However, this is a page for all Vermonters, and it is necessary and Constitutionally permissible to have a social media policy that encourages a civil dialogue and protects commenters from being abused, harassed or exposed to hate speech. This need has been reinforced by other users who have asked the Office to moderate comments they find disrespectful, abusive and offensive.

"Consistent with [our publicly posted social media policy](#), and our efforts to protect commenters from being abused, harassed or exposed to hate speech, the office does moderate the page. This includes deleting obscene, vulgar and offensive comments, as well as personal attacks against other individuals or groups, including comments that have attacked women, the mentally handicapped and the LGBTQ community.

"To be clear, comments are only deleted when they are abusive, obscene or hateful and users are only blocked when they display a pattern of this behavior. Even a cursory review of the comments on the Governor's Facebook page makes clear that dissenting, critical and even insulting comments towards the Governor are left on the page.

"That said, we would welcome any specific recommendations from the ACLU to narrow certain provisions or improve our procedural documentation and communication related to this policy, while ensuring the civil discourse that encourages all to engage with the page."