

Enclosure: Responses to Questions from February 6, 2023 Letter

- 1. Were you made aware of the alleged incident said to have occurred on January 20, 2023? a. If so, when were you made aware of the incident?**

On Saturday, January 21, 2023, I was made aware that for a few hours during the afternoon of Friday, January 20, 2023, visitors wearing pro-life hats were asked to remove their hats at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum.

I immediately asked my team to address this matter and take corrective action. I learned that corrective actions had already begun as soon as individuals on the scene became aware of the error.

- 2. Has the Smithsonian conducted any internal investigations into the allegations?**

Yes. Leadership at the museum and in our security department became involved as soon as they were aware to address the problem and take immediate corrective actions. We also reviewed how to better communicate our policies to our security personnel.

- 3. Please provide the names of the Smithsonian employees whose conduct is in question.**

The direction for visitors to remove pro-life hats was a mistake. Security staff were informed of the error and reminded of Smithsonian policy shortly afterwards so that such an incident will not recur.

We are not releasing the names of staff out of concern for their safety. Statements made on social media and in correspondence we have received have contained harassing and threatening language directed at them.

- 4. What disciplinary action has the Smithsonian taken regarding this incident? If no action has been taken, please provide delineate the course of action the Smithsonian plans to take regarding this incident.**

The instruction to visitors to remove their pro-life hats was a mistake – a misinterpretation of what was permissible. It was not a willful violation. The Smithsonian has taken several steps to address this issue:

- Following this incident, the Smithsonian reinforced the Smithsonian policy for visitors with security staff at the Air and Space Museum.

- Starting January 23, 2023, the Smithsonian also began a refresher training to security staff at all Smithsonian museums on applicable Smithsonian policy. If additional information stemming from our on-going review of this matter reveals that any Smithsonian employees engaged in misconduct on January 20, it will be addressed consistent with Smithsonian policies and procedures.

5. Does the Smithsonian have any policy prohibiting pro-life sentiments from being expressed in its buildings or any policy deeming it a “neutral zone?”

We welcome all visitors without regard to their beliefs. Visitors may wear hats and other types of clothing with messages so long as their conduct is otherwise in compliance with Smithsonian policy. The Smithsonian does not allow demonstrations in the Smithsonian museums, including the carrying of placards, signs, and banners, regardless of the viewpoint of the demonstrations. Participants in demonstrations on the National Mall, however, are always welcome to enter Smithsonian buildings for museum purposes.

6. What efforts have you taken to ensure that the First Amendments rights of all Americans are respected at the Air and Space Museum and an incident like this never occurs again under your leadership?

The Smithsonian has already initiated refresher training as discussed above. In addition, the Smithsonian will incorporate a standard practice to review our policies before any scheduled demonstration and/or protest and take appropriate steps to ensure First Amendment rights are protected and respected at the Institution.