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Public Employees Can Lose Their Jobs Over Online Information

Posted on January 21, 2013 by [Jay M. Wolman](#)



Though public employees tend to enjoy greater protections than private sector employees, their personal activities posted online can cost them their jobs. On January 11, 2013, the California Commission on Professional Competence issued an influential [ruling](#) upholding the termination of an adult actress turned teacher. The three-judge panel issued a 46-page decision denying the Stacie Halas's appeal to return to work after her school's administration discovered her previous career.

Halas, formerly known as Tiffany Six, was three years removed from a brief career in the adult entertainment industry when she was hired in 2009. She taught science at the Richard B. Haydock Intermediate School in Oxnard, California. Halas did not disclose her past upon hiring or during her employment.

This past April, however, students and teachers became aware of Halas's past, with explicit content readily available online. This caused an immediate disruption, physically manifested by profanity engraved on her classroom window. Halas was terminated because she could no longer be an effective teacher. Halas was fired from two previous teaching jobs for similar reasons.

Ethics scholar Jack Marshall has long studied the "Naked Teacher Principal," which he describes as being an irreversible stain on a teacher's professional ability and reputation. [Marshall writes](#), "The principle, based in accountability and responsibility, holds that once a teacher has allowed naked or otherwise sexually provocative photographs of herself or himself to become available over the internet, that teacher will be unable to properly maintain the respect of and proper professional relationship to students, serve as a role model, or be trusted to meet professional standards."

Halas appealed the decision to the California Commission on Professional Competence, who ruled last week that the ever-present availability of Halas's adult film work inhibited her ability to effectively teach and run a classroom.

While this decision may not apply to many because it deals specifically with pornographic videos, it is yet another reminder to be careful about what you put in the public purview and to always be up front about your past when seeking work. Even if the subject matter is embarrassing and not itself a bar to employment, a lack of candor in the job application process is a frequent cause for lawful termination.

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