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# Aide resigns over alleged racist joke

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An aide to Santa Cruz County Supervisor Walt Symons resigned this morning after coming under fire for circulating what another supervisor said is a joke with sexist and racist overtones.

Jim Kelland quit because "he felt he had put me in an awkward position," Symons told reporters at 10:30 a.m. Symons said Kelland had decided to resign before supervisors discussed the issue at a closed per-

sonnel session at 10 a.m.

The closed session was requested by Supervisor Fred Keeley, who called the joke distributed by Kelland Wednesday as "racist, sexist and unwelcome in our work environment."

The joke, titled "Farmer's Dayvorce," describes, in a hayseed accent, a white country bumpkin asking a lawyer about getting a divorce.

"Well, is she a nagger or anything?" the attorney asks the farmer.

"No she's a little white gal,"

the farmer replies. "But our last child was a nagger and that's why I want this dayvorce."

"The issue is one of county liability," Keeley said in an interview this morning, saying the county has discussed similar cases in litigation sessions. The interview came before Kelland's resignation.

Keeley said one of his staff members was present Wednesday when Kelland gave a copy of the joke to another supervisor in a common area of the

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## JOKE

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board offices.

Gary Patton said this morning he was that supervisor in the incident late Wednesday. Patton, who was out of town Thursday and Friday, said he brought the issue to Symons' attention yesterday morning.

Keeley's memo was put on a public clipboard of board correspondence yesterday, but later pulled off by the board's administrative assistant because it dealt with personnel.

Symons said this morning that putting the memo on the public clipboard "was a violation of his (Kelland's) civil rights."

Symons said he was "shocked and disappointed" when Patton brought the matter to his attention.

It was Kelland's decision to resign, said Symons, who said he wouldn't release Kelland's resignation letter to the public. Each supervisor has the power to hire and fire his aides.

Kelland was in his office this morning but did not return a call from this reporter. By the time Symons announced the resignation, Kelland had left the county building.

Kelland was one of two half-time aides Symons hired when he took office last month. Symons said at the time that Kelland was working on an interim basis until a full-time aide is hired.

Keeley is a liberal and a supporter of Robley Levy, who lost her bid for a fourth term as Midcounty supervisor to the more conservative Symons.