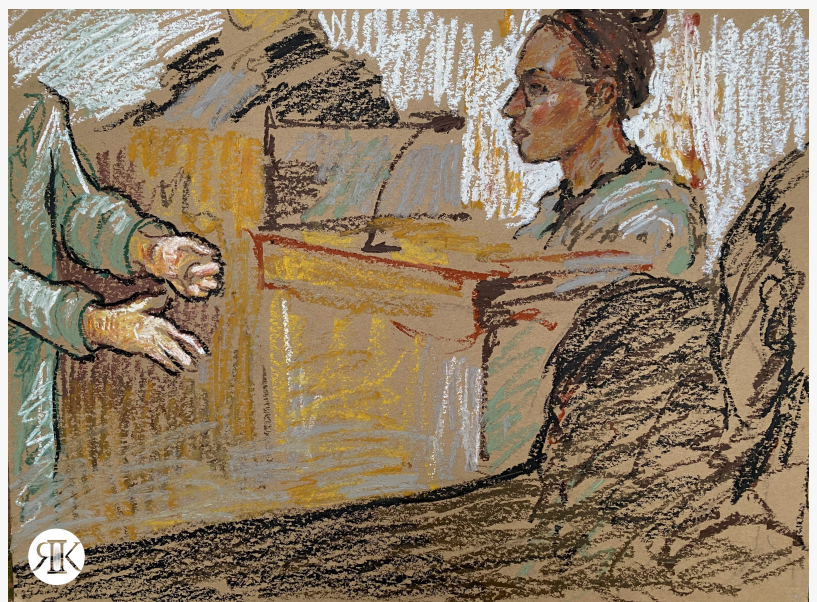


Jury finds for disabled veteran in ADA discrimination trial against Clayton County Sheriff's Office

A federal jury found that former Clayton County, Georgia Sheriff Victor Hill discriminated against a disabled veteran by terminating her employment.

DECATUR, GEORGIA, UNITED STATES, May 22, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On May 19, 2023, after a three-day trial, a jury found that the Sheriff's Office of Clayton County, Georgia, discriminated and retaliated against a disabled veteran after she notified her supervisors of her diagnosis of PTSD. The case was filed in 2019 under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Rehabilitation Act. The jury awarded the plaintiff back pay equivalent to two years salary, plus compensatory damages, for a total verdict of \$202,811.96. The case, captioned Williams v. Allen was tried before Hon. J. P. Boulee in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia. Ms. Williams was represented by Regan Keebaugh and James Radford of the Decatur, Georgia law firm Radford & Keebaugh, LLC.



A courtroom sketch depicting plaintiff Brittani Williams testifying in her employment discrimination trial.

Brittani Williams is a veteran of the U.S. Army Reserves. She had been an employee of the Sheriff's Office since 2012 and was working as a Sheriff's Services Clerk. In 2019, after she was transferred from the day shift to the night shift, she sent her supervisors a letter from her providers at the Department of Veteran's Affairs, notifying them that the shift change may cause her to experience increased symptoms associated with her PTSD. Her immediate supervisors were all willing to work with her, and one gentleman volunteered to escort her to her vehicle in the evening. However, when former Sheriff Victor Hill was informed of the request, he wrote "do a fit for duty status and release from employment."

At trial, the Sheriff's Office argued that Ms. Williams' disability rendered her unqualified for the

job. They also claimed that Ms. Williams was terminated for coming to work one day with her hair dyed red. They further argued that she was unable to work, citing her disability rating with the VA.

However, the jury rejected each of these arguments.

Former Sheriff Victor Hill did not testify at trial. On the day before trial, he reported to federal prison in Arkansas. On October 26, 2022, former Sheriff Hill was [convicted in federal court of six counts](#) of willfully depriving pre-trial detainees in his custody of their constitutional rights by strapping them into a restraint chair, resulting in serious bodily harm on each occasion. He was sentenced to 18 months in prison. In lieu of appearing at trial, the jury was presented with Hill's videotaped deposition.

The jury heard testimony from Clayton County Director of Human Resources Pamela Ambles, who urged Hill to seek accommodations for Ms. Williams under the ADA rather than subjecting her to the "fitness for duty" process. The jury also heard from several of Ms. Williams' supervisors, who testified that she was a high-performing employee, and that it was no burden to escort her to her vehicle. The witnesses described a heavy-handed, top-down leadership style from former Sheriff Hill, in which people were afraid to make recommendations regarding employment issues for fear of retribution.

"This was a hard fought case in which the Sheriff's Office filed numerous motions to try and prevent a jury from ever hearing the evidence," said Regan Keebaugh, who served as lead counsel in the case. "We fought many battles along the way, from her unemployment benefits appeal all the way through to this trial."

"It was an honor to represent this veteran. Hearing the jury's verdict was such a proud moment, and it makes the long hours and stress of trial worth it," said partner James Radford.

The case is Williams v. Allen, 1:20-CV-0186-JPB, in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia.

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