

Federal Jury Awards Former Putnam County Worker \$333,349 Over Service Dog Retaliation Claim

CHATTANOOGA, TN, UNITED STATES, September 2, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Gary Massey Injury Lawyers](#), a Chattanooga, Tennessee-based personal injury and employment law firm, obtained a jury verdict of \$333,349.01 on behalf of a former Putnam County maintenance worker. The verdict was returned following a four-day trial in the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Tennessee (case number 2:24-cv-00083), in a case alleging retaliatory discharge after the plaintiff requested permission to bring his certified service dog to work.



Gary Massey Injury Lawyers Verdict

According to trial testimony, the plaintiff, identified in court records as Mr. Vaden, worked as a maintenance worker for Putnam County, Tennessee. The evidence presented at trial showed that

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than Hargraves, Senior Trial Attorney at Gary Massey Injury Lawyers

Mr. Vaden sought permission to bring his service dog to work after obtaining proper medical documentation and credentials for the animal. According to the complaint, Mr. Vaden was terminated from his position shortly after making that request, prompting the retaliatory discharge claim at the center of the case.

Evidence presented at trial showed that Mr. Vaden lives with post-traumatic stress disorder and an anxiety disorder that includes panic attacks, conditions for which he has received significant treatment. Testimony established that his service dog, valued at approximately

\$10,000, was trained specifically to assist with his condition. Attorney Ethan Hargraves tried the case on Mr. Vaden's behalf, with assistance from attorney Nathan Slaymaker. According to case records, the last and best settlement offer from the defense prior to trial was \$35,000; the jury's

verdict of \$333,349.01 substantially exceeded that offer. Attorney fees related to the case have not yet been determined.

The lawsuit named Putnam County, Tennessee as the defendant. The complaint alleged that the defendant terminated Mr. Vaden in retaliation for his request to bring a certified service dog to work as a disability accommodation, in violation of applicable employment and disability protections.

"Justice was overdue for Mr. Vaden," said Ethan Hargraves, Senior Trial Attorney at Gary Massey Injury Lawyers. "This verdict affirms that retaliating against a disabled worker for following the law carries real consequences."

"Preparing this case alongside Ethan was a reminder that thorough trial work protects people who simply asked to be accommodated," said Nathan Slaymaker, Litigation Associate at Gary Massey Injury Lawyers.

The case underscores the legal protections available to employees who request reasonable accommodations for documented disabilities, including the use of trained service animals in the workplace. Gary Massey Injury Lawyers said the verdict reflects the jury's recognition of the harm caused when an employer retaliates against a worker for exercising his rights.

Individuals who believe they have experienced retaliation or discrimination related to a workplace accommodation request are encouraged to contact Gary Massey Injury Lawyers to discuss their legal options.

About Gary Massey Injury Lawyers

Gary Massey Injury Lawyers is a personal injury law firm serving clients throughout Tennessee and Georgia. Founded by attorney Gary Massey, the firm is dedicated to helping people injured by negligence pursue the compensation they deserve. With decades of experience, including Gary Massey's unique background defending insurance companies before representing injured victims, the firm brings valuable insight to every case.

The firm handles a wide range of personal injury matters, including car and truck accidents, motorcycle crashes, premises liability, medical malpractice, nursing home negligence, workers' compensation, and employment law. Guided by the firm's promise to work aggressively with honesty and compassion, the team is committed to providing straightforward advice, personalized representation, and relentless advocacy for every client. Learn more at the [Gary Massey Injury Lawyers website](#).

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