

McGuire whistleblower hires attorney in fight to stop alleged retaliation



By **Diane Walker** | November 24, 2016 at 4:25 AM EST - Updated July 10 at 6:01 AM

RICHMOND, VA (WWBT) - We're hearing from the attorney representing a McGuire VA Hospital employee who says she's being bullied and abused for reporting alleged nepotism.

The Assistant Human Resources Officer says she was pressured to hire another top level manager's husband for a job he wasn't qualified for. She reported it and now she's fighting to keep her job. Secretary Robert McDonald's office has more to say than McGuire Hospital officials. The local VA Hospital says it can't comment on personnel issues.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' statement says, in part, it's working hard to create a climate that embraces constructive dissent and goes on to say whistleblower retaliation is unacceptable. Lorelei Hudson says taxpayers should be outraged that McGuire VA Hospital is paying her \$94,846 dollars a year and hasn't given their Assistant Human Resources Officer any job assignments in eight months. They moved her from her HR office to a small room with no responsibilities, as punishment Lorelei says, for reporting alleged violation of prohibited personnel practices.

"It's discriminatory. It's whistleblower retaliation and harassment and bullying all together," said Hudson.

Her attorney, a federal employment law and civil litigator, says McGuire hospital leaders chose the wrong response to concerns about alleged nepotism.

"The correct response would have been thank you for bringing that to my attention. We are going to conduct an investigation to see if indeed this practice is illegal and if so we are going to take immediate corrective action. The wrong response is what we see here, by stripping the employee of their responsibilities and ostracizing them to some remote area," said Attorney Ariel Solomon with the Solomon Law Firm.

Lorelei's eight-month fight has sparked an investigation by the Office of Special Counsel, a federal agency that protects whistleblowers and has authority to shakeup the power structure and stay any moves at McGuire to fire Lorelei. She's suing for money and Attorney Solomon says, "Absolutely and she's entitled to money based on the conduct that they have subjected her to."

Lorelei says no employee should fear reporting wrongdoing or suffer retaliation if they do.

"It's hard because I worked so hard and care about people. I love my job. When I come into the VA and I see people, I see women who are pushing wheelchairs. I see veterans. I served in the military. I hope through this story and you taking the time to listen to me it will bring awareness and hopefully it will stop and truly the policy of No Fear will really be no fear."

We will stay on top of these allegations of waste fraud and abuse and inform you as soon as we learn of any action by the Office of Special Counsel.

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