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Ex-Tourism Director Files Lawsuit Citing Discrimination and Nepotism in Virgin Islands

After 20 years of service, Kay Milliner-Kitchens alleges that her career was undermined by favoritism and a hostile work environment, leading to her wrongful termination

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Kay Milliner-Kitchens

Alleging an entrenched pattern of discrimination and favoritism within the V.I. Department of Tourism, former acting director of sales Kay Milliner-Kitchens has taken her grievances to the District Court of the Virgin Islands. Her lawsuit claims that after two decades of dedicated service, she was wrongfully terminated, the culmination of what she describes as a systematic effort to

undermine her career in favor of less experienced individuals with personal connections to high-ranking officials.

Last week, Ms. Milliner-Kitchens, a resident of Atlanta, Georgia, filed her complaint, outlining a series of grievances that began in 2019 with the appointment of Joseph Boschulte as the new commissioner of the department.

Ms. Milliner-Kitchens said she began working for the department in 2003. She was hired as an “off-shore employee”, one of several who work for the Department of Tourism but primarily reside outside the Virgin Islands.?

The plaintiff said that in June of 2019, DOT unilaterally eliminated her \$200 work-from-home stipend, in violation of a 2009 memorandum of agreement. Overtime payments also ceased, but Ms. Milliner-Kitchens says she was still expected to maintain the same workload and working arrangements as before.?

Her treatment, she argues, was part of a new unspoken policy of discrimination that gave more favorable treatment to Virgin Islanders than those born on the mainland. While monies enshrined in her agreement were stopped, Ms. Milliner-Kitchens alleges that “native Virgin islanders, regardless their location or employment status with the DOT, received increased remuneration for their work with the DOT.”?

She describes a scenario that lasted from September 2022 through December 2022 when an independent contractor based in New York refused to perform any of her duties due to lack of payment. Ms. Milliner-Kitchens says she was tasked to pick up the slack caused by the other woman’s work stoppage. However, she was reportedly not compensated for the extra work, while the independent contractor, who the lawsuit identifies as the sister of GERS Administrator Angel Dawson, received a \$20,000 raise.?

Ms. Milliner-Kitchens’s lawsuit claims that the other two independent off-shore contractors employed by the Department of Tourism are also closely related to high-ranking government officials – a cousin of Mr. Boschulte’s wife, and [the daughter of former Attorney General Denise George-Counts](#). All three, according to the lawsuit, were hired at the same salary as Ms. Milliner-Kitchens, despite her two decades of experience in the department.

The three independent contractors were singularly unproductive, Ms. Milliner-Kitchens claims. They continuously failed to submit reports, “were unmanageable and were not subject to discipline.” She claims that after complaining about the lack of work output coming from the Atlanta desk, she was told by Mr. Boschulte that he “had to hire” his wife’s cousin. Eventually, Ms. Milliner-Kitchens said that the three independent contractors began to bully and harass her, a circumstance their supervisor Mr. Boschulte failed to address.

Things came to a head when dueling complaint letters were sent to Commissioner Boschulte - one from Ms. Milliner-Kitchens, and one from an independent contractor. No response was made to either letter, the lawsuit claims, however Ms. Milliner-Kitchens was referred to the Governor for termination.

That termination came in a Microsoft TEAMS meeting on July 12, 2023, just over a month after Ms. Milliner-Kitchens observed her 20th anniversary of employment with the Department of Tourism. She was locked out of her work email immediately following that meeting, and a letter dated July 11, 2023 subsequently arrived in her personal email inbox. “The termination of Milliner-Kitchen’s employment was not for cause or for any reason related to the performance of

her job duties,” the lawsuit claims. Rather, it came a month after the DOT allegedly botched the management of a period of leave taken pursuant to the Family and Medical Leave Act, and six months after her report against a contractor for bullying and harassment.?

Ms. Milliner-Kitchens has claimed that the Government of the Virgin Islands, the Department of Tourism, and Commissioner Boschulte himself are all guilty of discrimination, harassment, creating a hostile work environment, retaliation and wrongful termination. She is asking the court to find in her favor and award her appropriate damages and compensation.

As of press time, defendants have yet to file a response to the allegations.

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