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Washington, D.C., employee awarded \$525,000 for age-based firing

Matthew Kauffman (https://thedailyrecord.com/authors/matthew-kauffman/) July 16, 2025 // **3 Minute Read** (https://www.linkedin.com/shareArticle?mini=true&url=https://thedailyrecord.com/2025/07/16/dc-age-discrimination-verdict-hsema/&title=Washington, D.C., employee awarded \$525,000 for age-based firing) A federal jury awarded \$525,000 to a former employee of the Washington, D.C., Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency in an age discrimination lawsuit. Patrice White worked at HSEMA for... You can read the content in details following link https://thedailyrecord.com/2025/07/16/dc-age-discrimination-verdict-hsema/

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A federal jury awarded \$525,000 to a former employee of the Washington, D.C., [Homeland Security](https://thedailyrecord.com/tag/homeland-security/) and Emergency Management Agency in an [age discrimination](https://thedailyrecord.com/tag/age-discrimination/) lawsuit.

Patrice White worked at [HSEMA](https://thedailyrecord.com/tag/hsema/) for 33 years and was fired just five weeks before she would have earned her retirement benefits, one of which was lifetime health care.

Without a college degree, White worked her way through the department from an entry-level position all the way to chief of the Resilience Bureau, a position two steps below the director of the department.

Over her time, she compiled extensive experience in emergency management. She completed over 90 seminars and courses and only planned to retire when she was 70.

She did not receive a single negative performance review until 2021, when she was fired. Her attorney, Jay Holland of Joseph Greenwald and Laake, said that her review fell two hundredths of a point below what would have been considered a “valued performer.”

“They gave her no warning, no write-up, no performance improvement plan,” he said. “They said ‘you could either retire, or you’re fired.’ ”

White said another older employee was pushed to retire, and that a human resources rep engaged her about retirement. After her termination, she was replaced by a younger, less experienced employee.

The jury found that HSEMA had discriminated against White because of her age and awarded \$525,000 in back pay.

White was initially seeking damages for race, sex, and age [discrimination](https://thedailyrecord.com/tag/discrimination/), the last of which became the jury’s focus. The [Age Discrimination in Employment act](https://thedailyrecord.com/tag/age-discrimination-in-employment-act/) prevents employers from assuming that older employees should retire and from firing employees due to their age.

“We are immensely proud of Ms. White for standing up to this discrimination and winning this important jury verdict for herself,” Holland said.

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JGL represents clients in a variety of civil and criminal matters. Holland, an employment and qui tam litigator, said that there was a pattern of age-based discrimination at HSEMA.

“There was pressure placed on supervisors, include Ms. White and some of her peers, to more harshly grade older employees in performance reviews,” he said, to justify their terminations.

Holland said the legal team was happy with the damages and was exploring the option of asking the court to award White’s lost retirement benefits.

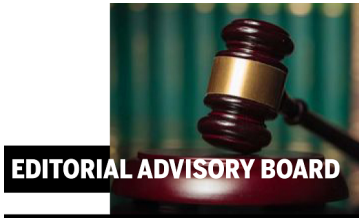
“This should put on notice to employers that they cannot simply decide to get rid of older employees and replace them with younger ones to change the culture or vibe of the workplace,” he said.

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