



BENTON EMPLOYMENT LAW

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**\*\*\*Press Release\*\*\***

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**After 28 Years of Service,  
NASA Discriminates Against and Terminates Older Firefighters  
Because They Complain and Try to Unionize**

**Moffett Field, CA (September 18, 2023).** NASA discriminated against and terminated two of their 53 year old Battalion Chiefs because they attempted to unionize and seek justice for the unfair treatment they received. On September 18, 2023, the lawsuit (case: 5:23-cv-04781) was filed in federal court alleging ongoing emotional distress, lost wages, and punitive damages.

For over 28 years, Cameron Gazaway and Robert Wilson served as firefighters and then Battalion Chiefs for NASA's Ames Research Center. Both were especially proud to have served on safety details for Presidents Clinton, Bush, and Obama, as well as Vice Presidents, government officials, and numerous international dignitaries, including the Prime Minister of Israel.

Gazaway is a Marine and Air Force veteran. Wilson is also an Air Force veteran.

After 28 years of service, NASA told them that they needed an associate degree (AA) in Fire Science to keep their jobs. They were given less than 45 days to obtain that degree. Two separate universities provided certifications that their training and years of experience exceed NASA's new job requirements. NASA rejected those certifications. Gazaway and Wilson requested additional time to comply with this new Fire Science AA requirement. NASA denied their requests.

During that time, NASA department leaders made repeated jokes and other discriminatory comments about Gazaway and Wilson's ages. They repeatedly called them "old man" and comments such as "look at that grey hair." Gazaway also experienced mistreatment because of his race (African American) and beard (Messianic Christian). Right after they complained about their unfair treatment and tried to unionize, they were notified by NASA of the new job requirement.

Gazaway and Wilson believe they were targeted by NASA because they are older workers and they spoke up about the harassment received from NASA's management. They were the only two Battalion Chiefs impacted by the new job requirement across all of NASA. Both men were 53 years of age at the time of their wrongful and retaliatory termination.

In Mr. Gazaway's own words, "This has been devastating. We planned to retire from Moffett Field with dignity and respect. NASA discarded us like trash because we complained and tried to unionize. I will not allow this injustice to silently occur. I am standing up against our

wrongful termination because of our age, my race, and our union activities. I don't want this to happen to anyone else who dedicates their life to protecting others."

Wilson stated, "I lost my identity and sense of purpose when I lost my job after 28 years of service at Moffett field. The shocking part is we both already have AA degrees just not in fire science. The arbitrary AA in fire science was specifically designed to push us out of our jobs as older workers. We should have been teaching the fire science classes not required to attend them. NASA's actions were despicable."

Attorney Chambord Benton-Hayes of Benton Employment Law filed a lawsuit on Monday, September 18, 2023 in San Francisco Federal Court case: 5:23-cv-04781. Benton-Hayes explained, "It's ridiculous that they were told—without an AA in Fire Science—they were no longer qualified to do the jobs they had been performing for the last twenty-eight (28) years. Their wrongful termination was based upon discrimination and retaliation. Given these facts, there is a risk of a colossal jury verdict. Cameron and Rob have dedicated their lives to protecting others and I am proud to fight for justice for them and ensure this unfair treatment does not happen to others."



Chambord Benton-Hayes of Benton Employment Law represents Plaintiffs. For media inquiries, call (510) 407-7548 or email [chambord@bentonemploymentlaw.com](mailto:chambord@bentonemploymentlaw.com)