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ICE agent settles harassment lawsuit with gov't

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A senior agent for Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the government have agreed to settle a discrimination lawsuit, according a court record filed Thursday.

In a two-sentence notice, a lawyer for ICE Agent James T. Hayes Jr. said the "parties have come to an agreement in principal" to settle the case for \$175,000.

Hayes' attorney in Maryland, Morris Fischer, wrote that along with the money, "a formal settlement agreement will be executed within the next several days" that will include other conditions, including Hayes keeping his job. It was not immediately clear who will pay Hayes, who is currently in charge of the agency's New York office.

Fischer was in a deposition Thursday and could not immediately be reached for comment.

The Homeland Security Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Hayes filed the lawsuit in May and described a "frat house" environment at ICE that humiliated male employees under former ICE chief of staff Suzanne Barr.

After Hayes' case was filed, additional employees came forward with other allegations of sexually inappropriate behavior toward employees. In one complaint, Barr was accused of calling a male subordinate "sexy" and asking a personal question about his anatomy at an office party. A different complaint alleged that she offered to perform an oral sex act on a male subordinate during a work trip to Bogota, Colombia.

Barr went on leave in August after a newspaper story was published about the case and resigned in September. In her resignation letter to ICE Director John Morton, Barr said she has been the subject of "unfounded allegations designed to destroy my reputation" and was resigning "with great regret."

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