



PRESS RELEASE

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EEOC Sues Maui County Police Department for Age Discrimination

45-Year-Old Qualified Candidate Denied Police Officer Position Due to Age, Federal Agency Says

HONOLULU, Hawaii - The County of Maui violated federal law when it refused to hire a qualified candidate as a police officer due to his age, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) charged in a lawsuit it filed today in the state of Hawaii.

According to the EEOC's suit, Lars Sandstrom applied for the position of police officer in 2009, met all of the minimum qualifications for the position and passed the qualifying written exam. Sandstrom also had a bachelor's degree and extensive military and life experience which qualified him for the position. The EEOC contends that during the job interview, assumptions were made about Sandstrom's abilities given his age of 45 at the time, including the comment that, "I doubt someone your age could handle the stress of training." Sandstrom was thereafter not selected for the position. An EEOC investigation found that several other less qualified candidates were hired as police officers during the time in question. Nonetheless, Sandstrom was able to secure employment as a police officer at another police department.

Such alleged conduct violates the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA). The EEOC filed its suit against the County of Maui in U.S. District Court for the District of Hawaii (*EEOC v. County of Maui Police Department*, Case No. CV-13-00698-LEK-KSC), after first attempting to reach a pre-litigation settlement through its conciliation process. The EEOC's suit seeks back pay, benefits and liquidated damages for Sandstrom as well as injunctive relief intended to prevent further discrimination at the department.

"Older workers continue to face discrimination based on age due to negative stereotypes and inaccurate assumptions about their abilities," said Anna Park, regional attorney for the EEOC's Los Angeles District, which includes Hawaii in its jurisdiction. "It is important for employers to ensure that such stereotyping does not impact a person's ability to be employed."

Timothy Riera, local director of the EEOC's Honolulu Local Office, said, "Age discrimination remains a problem, making up 23 percent of all EEOC charges filed in Hawaii and in the United States last year. It is important that employers not ignore the value that older workers can bring to their workforce."

The EEOC is responsible for enforcing federal laws against employment discrimination. Further information is available at www.eeoc.gov.