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AGREEMENT REACHED TO RESOLVE CONTEMPT PROCEEDING
AGAINST THE HOUSING AUTHORITY OF BEAUMONT, TEXAS

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The Beaumont, Texas Housing Authority, which allegedly violated a year-old agreement by terminating an employee who reported an allegation of sexual harassment, will train its employees and allow increased monitoring of agency personnel practices, under a supplemental agreement reached today with the Justice Department.

Today's supplemental consent decree, filed in U.S. District Court in Beaumont, resolves a contempt motion filed by the Justice Department last July alleging that the Beaumont Housing Authority (BHA) terminated Debra Kay Marshall, in violation of an earlier consent decree. The contempt motion asserted that Marshall, formerly the agency personnel director, was terminated because she reported a BHA employee's allegation of sexual harassment by a supervisor.

The agreement does not make a finding of liability and BHA has maintained that it did not violate the law.

In February 1996, the Justice Department had charged BHA with violating Title VII of the Civil Rights Act by discriminating on the basis of race in hiring and promotions. The two parties entered into a consent decree requiring BHA to take steps to comply with the law and barring the BHA from taking retaliatory action against any person who reports discriminatory conduct.

"Today's filing makes it clear that the Justice Department will enforce its agreements," said Isabelle Katz Pinzler, Acting Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights. "We will not tolerate retaliation against individuals who come forward to report allegations of sexual harassment in the workplace."

Under the terms of the settlement, BHA will:

- * provide Marshall approximately \$30,000 in monetary relief if she will agree to release all of her claims against the BHA;
- * permit the Justice Department to increase its monitoring of BHA personnel practices;
- * increase training for all employees regarding federal anti-discrimination laws, and procedures for handling employees' reports of sexual harassment; and,
- * agree to a two year extension on the life of the original consent decree.

The agreement must still be approved by the court.

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