

*The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
March 10, 2006

CONTACT: Federico Costales  
District Director  
or  
Delner Franklin-Thomas  
Regional Attorney  
(305) 808-1848  
(305) 808-1853  
(305) 240-1017 - cell

## JURY ORDERS ASSOCIATED SECURITY TO PAY \$1.34 MILLION FOR SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND RETALIATION

### *EEOC Said Women were Subjected to Verbal and Physical Abuse by Company's Owner*

MIAMI – A jury in federal district court in Tallahassee, Florida, has returned a \$1.34 million verdict in a sexual harassment and retaliation lawsuit brought by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) against Associated Security Enforcement, Inc. under Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the agency announced today.

The EEOC's lawsuit, filed in 2004, charged the security company with subjecting four female former employees to a sexually hostile workplace from May 2002 until July 2003 at the company's location in Tallahassee. The harassment took the form of egregious acts of verbal and physical sexual conduct on the part of one of the company's owners. The EEOC says that Associated Security failed to take necessary steps to stop the harassment, despite complaints to the company's co-owner. The law firm of Richard Johnson, P.A. joined the EEOC suit as private counsel for three of the women (EEOC, et al. v. Associated Security Enforcement, Inc. Civil Case No. 4:04cv391-SPM).

After a two-day trial, the jury rendered an award in favor of the EEOC and private plaintiffs, providing \$35,000 each to two of the four women and \$25,000 each to the other two women to compensate them for the emotional pain and suffering they endured. The jury also assessed punitive damages against Associated Security in the amount of \$300,000 each for all four women. In addition, the jury granted plaintiffs' request for back pay totaling approximately \$17,000 for two of the women.

The harassment included the company's owner groping one of the women's breasts; requesting sex in exchange for money; inviting the women for overnight stays; and frequently requesting oral sex. The EEOC asserted that the women repeatedly rebuffed the owner's sexually offensive conduct and complained directly to the co-owner of the company; however, the corporate defendant failed to implement corrective action. Further, one of the female victims was the company's former human resources officer. She testified that the company owner tried to cover up the illegal conduct by ordering her to falsify the personnel records of the claimants who had filed sexual harassment charges with the EEOC.

Delner Franklin-Thomas, EEOC's regional attorney for the Miami District Office, said: "This jury's punitive damages award sends a clear message to employers that individuals have a right to work in an environment free of sexual harassment and that companies cannot avoid the duty to comply with the law -- even when the harasser is the highest management official in the company."

Lydia Hall, one of the claimants in the lawsuit, said that she was very pleased with the jury's verdict and the EEOC's willingness to advance the lawsuit.

EEOC Miami District Director Federico Costales said: "We are confident this verdict will encourage employers to be vigilant in their efforts to adopt policies and procedures that prohibit sex discrimination and retaliation in the workplace – which benefits employers and employees alike."

In addition to enforcing Title VII, as amended, which prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex (including sexual harassment or pregnancy) or national origin and protects employees who complain about such offenses from retaliation, the EEOC enforces the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, which protects workers age 40 and older from discrimination on the basis of age; the Equal Pay Act of 1963, which prohibits gender-based wage discrimination; the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibits employment discrimination against people with disabilities in the federal sector; Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, which prohibits employment discrimination against people with disabilities in the private sector and state and local governments; and sections of the Civil Rights Act of 1991. Further information about the Commission is available on the agency's web site at [www.eeoc.gov](http://www.eeoc.gov).

*This page was last modified on March 10, 2006.*



[Return to Home Page](#)