

FAA Whistleblower Files Lawsuit for \$800,000 Against Agency for Retaliation

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– A claim has been filed by well-known whistleblower Anne Whiteman against the Federal Aviation Authority for discrimination in the workplace based on her reporting that agency officials were concealing safety violations at Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport. As a result of her disclosure, Whiteman, an air traffic control specialist at the Texas airport, has faced a series of discriminatory personnel actions and is continually subjected to acts of retaliation attributed to her role in identifying that agency managers misclassified safety problems at eight times the national average. After blowing the whistle against the FAA in 1998, Whiteman was purposely removed from her position in the radar room, which is widely considered to be a demotion among air traffic controllers. Her position in the radar room had allowed her direct access to witness the safety concerns. Since the disclosure, Whiteman has been continually denied advancement. Her career progression and benefits have been dramatically hindered. Further, she has been subjected to severe acts of harassment from some supervisors, including physical assault and an attempt to run her off the road during her commute to work. The harassment has resulted in stress-induced stomach ulcers and a jaw disorder. “I had the best interest of the public at heart for the past ten years when reporting these serious safety concerns. I just could not turn a blind eye to the FAA’s continual failure to correct the problems,” said Whiteman, who has reported safety violations at the airport that were twice confirmed by federal investigations. “I feel that as a result of aiding public safety I’ve had my career seriously damaged. I only did what I felt was right – people were going to die.” Whiteman filed an appeal alleging the retaliation with the Merit Systems Protection Board this past month. “Federal employees who take the courageous step to blow the whistle on their employers should not be subjected to retaliation in return. While the Office of Special Counsel has commended Ms. Whiteman for her extensive involvement in their investigations against the FAA, it does not change the fact that her direct employers have made it a point to limit the advancement of her career at the airport,” said Ariel Solomon, Esq., Whiteman’s attorney. “It is my hope that the new administration will bring a significant change to the way the FAA has treated one of their most courageous employees.” Whiteman reported in 1998, 2004 and 2007 that FAA officials were misclassifying instances in which planes were allowed to fly closer together than they were supposed to, attributing the errors to pilots in an attempt to shift blame away from air traffic controllers at the airport. Both the United States Office of Special Counsel and the Inspector General released reports this past week confirming the findings. Whiteman has been an employee at the airport for over twenty-five years.