

FM soldier wins battle against USPS for owed back pay

By Christina Lusby, Reporter

FORT MYERS, FL -A Fort Myers Green Beret was fired from the U.S. Postal Service for serving too long in the military. On Friday, Sergeant Major Richard Erickson won a major battle against his former employer - the U.S. Postal Service. The Postal Service will have to provide 14 years of back pay and benefits to Erickson. "He's been doing everything he can to support us," said Renee Erickson. Both of the Green Beret's daughters are supporting him - as Richard Erickson won another battle. "Who knows what is next," said Erickson. The worst part of the fight isn't overseas. It's a seven-year-old battle on the home front. "I was just serving my country and they fired me for doing that," said Erickson. Sgt. Major Erickson thought he was protected by the Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Rights act. Under the act, if a service member is called to duty they cannot be fired from their current job. A court agreed three times that Erickson had been unjustly fired. Now, the Merit Systems Protection Board has agreed. However, Erickson's former employer is still fighting him on it. "They appeal it every time. This is the fourth one," said Erickson. The board ruled Erickson should receive 14 years of back pay and benefits. That adds up to seven figures. "It has had a devastating impact on the family. The one that went off to war and came back and there is no support back home where it should be," said Erickson. Erickson joined the National Guard Reserve in the 1990s while working for the U.S. Postal Service. He was called to service. While fighting, Erickson received a letter. "At first I thought it was a joke. But after reading it and called them [USPS], they said I was terminated," said Erickson, "I was pretty upset." He says this isn't the first time a veteran has come home to find his desk cleared and position filled. "He's been our hero in the field fighting wars. Our wish is that he gets justice served for his case," said daughter Renee Erickson, "I hope, so no one else has to go through what he went through." Erickson has more on his mind than money. "I want to set the state for other veterans that are having difficulties," said Erickson, "I want them to know there is help and know there are rules and regulations."