

Article Launched: 07/31/2006

business

## Workers end suit for \$2.2 million

Employees who were near retirement said the BLM asked them to relocate to Washington, D.C., without telling them their job duties.

By Ameera Butt  
Denver Post Staff Writer

Seven workers at the Lakewood-based National Information Resource Management Center have obtained a \$2.2 million settlement in an age- discrimination lawsuit.

The group filed a lawsuit against the U.S. Bureau of Land Management in 2000, claiming they were asked to relocate to Washington, D.C., as a result of their ages. The center, a division of the BLM, was undergoing reorganization that included staff reductions, according to legal documents.

"The younger employees received preferential transfers, and the older employees were directed to the East Coast to positions that may not even have existed," said Todd McNamara, a partner at McNamara and Martinez LLP and lead counsel for the plaintiffs.

Twelve employees in their 40s, 50s and 60s were asked to relocate to Washington, without being told what their new jobs would require them to do, according to Florence Michael, the lead plaintiff.

She said four people did accept the transfer. The other eight filed a lawsuit and were represented by Denver-based McNamara and Martinez LLP and Roseman and Kazmierski LLC. One person dropped out before the settlement, which was announced last week.

"I think it's obviously an outstanding result for seven people who had the courage to stay with this litigation for many years," McNamara said. "It has never been easy to bring a claim, but it's typically more difficult to bring a claim against the government."

The employees were never told what their new duties would be in Washington, despite contacting management and requesting job descriptions, Michael said. She was a U.S. Navy veteran, was 63 at the time and worked as the national configuration manager.

"It was obvious because they picked out 12 people and told us to relocate or we wouldn't have a job," she said. "We were the older staff in the building.

"They knew the people who were within a year or two of retiring and knew they weren't going to sell their house and move across the country."

Michael had worked for the federal government for 12 years, three and a half of them with BLM.

"Unfortunately, under federal rules, if you are eligible to retire, you don't even get severance pay," she said. "They forced us into retirement."

The attorney for BLM could not be reached for comment Friday afternoon.

Staff writer Ameera Butt can be reached at 303-820-1233 or [abutt@denverpost.com](mailto:abutt@denverpost.com).