



U.S. EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION

Office of Federal Operations

P.O. Box 77960

Washington, DC 20013

[REDACTED]
Concepcion M,¹
Complainant,

v.

Louis DeJoy,
Postmaster General,
United States Postal Service
(Field Areas and Regions),
Agency.

Appeal No. 2024004310

Agency No. 4J-606-0114-24

DECISION

Complainant filed an appeal with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC or Commission) from the Agency's decision dated June 17, 2024, dismissing her complaint of unlawful employment discrimination in violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII), as amended, 42 U.S.C. § 2000e et seq.

ISSUES PRESENTED

Whether the Agency's final decision properly dismissed Complainant's complaint for failure to state a claim in accordance with EEOC Regulation 29 C.F.R. § 1614.107(a)(1).

¹ This case has been randomly assigned a pseudonym which will replace Complainant's name when the decision is published to non-parties and the Commission's website.

BACKGROUND

At the time of events giving rise to this complaint, Complainant worked as a Manager, Customer Service, EAS-21, at the Agency's Jackson Park Station facility in Chicago, Illinois.

On May 22, 2024, Complainant filed a formal complaint alleging that the Agency subjected her to a hostile work environment and discrimination on the basis of reprisal for prior protected EEO activity (Agency No. 4J-606-0136-23 and Agency No. 6P-230-0002-22) when on January 3, 2024, Complainant was issued a Notice of Proposed Letter of Warning in Lieu of a 14 Day Time Off Suspension.

On June 17, 2024, the Agency issued a final decision dismissing the complaint pursuant to 29 C.F.R. § 1614.107(a)(5). The Agency found a complaint should be dismissed if it is moot or alleges that a proposal to take a personnel action, or other preliminary step to taking a personnel action, is discriminatory. The Agency noted given the proposal to take action against Complainant did not make her an "aggrieved employee" who suffered a present harm or loss with respect to a term, condition or privilege of employment for which there is a remedy. The dismissal noted Complainant had yet to receive a final letter of decision on the proposed action. The dismissal advised Complainant that if management implements the proposed action, Complainant had 45 days to seek EEO counseling about a complaint.

Complainant, through her attorney, filed the instant appeal.

CONTENTIONS ON APPEAL

On appeal, Complainant submitted her Notice of Appeal, the Agency's final decision dismissing her complaint, and a copy of the EEO Counselor's EEO Dispute Resolution Specialist's Inquiry Report (hereafter Report). The Report, which the Agency included in the appeal file, reiterated Complainant's allegations in her formal complaint.

The Agency did not submit a statement on appeal.

STANDARD OF REVIEW

The Agency's decision to dismiss a complaint is subject to de novo review by the Commission, which requires the Commission to examine the record without regard to the factual and legal determinations of the previous decision maker and issue its decision based on the Commission's own assessment of the record and its interpretation of the law. 29 C.F.R. § 1614.405(a). The Commission should construe the complaint in the light most favorable to the complainant and take the complaint's allegations as true. See Cobb v. Department of the Treasury, EEOC Request No. 05970077 (March 13, 1997). Thus, all reasonable inferences that may be drawn from the complaint's allegations must be made in favor of the complainant.

ANALYSIS

Under the regulations set forth at 29 C.F.R. Part 1614, an agency shall accept a complaint from an aggrieved employee or applicant for employment who believes that he or she has been discriminated against by that agency because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age or disabling condition. 29 C.F.R. §§ 1614.103, .106(a). The Commission's federal sector case precedent has long defined an "aggrieved employee" as one who suffers a present harm or loss with respect to a term, condition, or privilege of employment for which there is a remedy. Diaz v. Dep't of the Air Force, EEOC Request No. 05931049 (Apr. 21, 1994). EEOC Regulation 29 C.F.R. § 1614.107(a)(1) provides for the dismissal of complaints for failure to state a claim.

Here, however, Complainant has alleged that identified Agency officials subjected her to discrimination by making false allegations against her competency with mail counting and the discipline itself was a veil for retaliating against her for filing two previous EEO complaints. Complainant has claimed reprisal as the basis of her complaint. The anti-retaliation provisions of the employment discrimination statutes seek to prevent an employer from interfering with an employee's efforts to secure or advance enforcement of the statutes' basic guarantees and are not limited to actions affecting employment terms and conditions. Burlington Northern & Santa Fe Railroad. Co. v. White, 548 U. S. 53, 126 S. Ct. 2405 (2006). The Commission has a policy of considering reprisal claims with a broad view of coverage.

Under Commission policy, claims of retaliatory actions are not restricted to those which affect a term or condition of employment. Rather, a complainant is protected from actions that are reasonably likely to deter protected activity. See Carroll v. Department of the Army, EEOC Request No. 05970939 (April 4, 2000). Thus, while proposed employment actions might normally be dismissed under 29 CFR § 1614.107(a)(5), proposed actions alleged in a claim of reprisal are considered adverse actions if they are reasonably likely to deter protected activity. Goodwin v. Department of the Air Force, EEOC Appeal No. 01991301, 01A01796 (October 18, 2000) (finding that a proposed reprimand allegedly issued in a reprisal for prior EEO activity states a claim where it is reasonably likely to deter future activity).

A fair reading of the complaint, along with the related EEO counseling report and Complainant's statement on appeal, show that Complainant has alleged behavior that, if proven to be true, could reasonably be likely to deter protected activity. By alleging such behavior by Agency officials, Complainant has alleged a viable injury or harm to a term, condition, or privilege of employment for which there could be a remedy. Given the specific circumstance of this case as noted above, and viewing the record in the light most favorable to Complainant, we find that she is alleging that such purported actions are motivated by retaliation for prior protected EEO activity. Therefore, the Commission finds that Complainant's complaint was improperly dismissed pursuant to 29 C.F.R. § 1614.107(a)(5) for failure to state a claim.

CONCLUSION

Accordingly, the Agency's final decision dismissing Complainant's complaint is VACATED. The complaint is hereby REMANDED to the Agency for further processing in accordance with this decision and the Order below.

ORDER

The Agency is ordered to process the remanded claims in accordance with 29 C.F.R. § 1614.108. The Agency shall acknowledge to the Complainant that it has received the remanded claims **within thirty (30) calendar days** of the date this decision was issued. The Agency shall issue to Complainant a copy of the investigative file and also shall notify Complainant of the appropriate rights **within one hundred fifty (150) calendar days** of the date this decision was issued, unless the matter is otherwise resolved prior to that time.

If the Complainant requests a final decision without a hearing, the Agency shall issue a final decision **within sixty (60) days** of receipt of Complainant's request.

As provided in the statement entitled "Implementation of the Commission's Decision," the Agency must send to the Compliance Officer: 1) a copy of the Agency's letter of acknowledgment to Complainant, 2) a copy of the Agency's notice that transmits the investigative file and notice of rights, and 3) either a copy of the complainant's request for a hearing, or a copy of the final agency decision ("FAD") if Complainant does not request a hearing.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMISSION'S DECISION (K0719)

Under 29 C.F.R. § 1614.405(c) and § 1614.502, compliance with the Commission's corrective action is mandatory. Within seven (7) calendar days of the completion of each ordered corrective action, the Agency shall submit via the Federal Sector EEO Portal (FedSEP) supporting documents in the digital format required by the Commission, referencing the compliance docket number under which compliance was being monitored. Once all compliance is complete, the Agency shall submit via FedSEP a final compliance report in the digital format required by the Commission. See 29 C.F.R. § 1614.403(g). The Agency's final report must contain supporting documentation when previously not uploaded, and the Agency must send a copy of all submissions to the Complainant and his/her representative.

If the Agency does not comply with the Commission's order, the Complainant may petition the Commission for enforcement of the order. 29 C.F.R. § 1614.503(a). The Complainant also has the right to file a civil action to enforce compliance with the Commission's order prior to or following an administrative petition for enforcement. See 29 C.F.R. §§ 1614.407, 1614.408, and 29 C.F.R. § 1614.503(g). Alternatively, the Complainant has the right to file a civil action on the underlying complaint in accordance with the paragraph below entitled "Right to File a Civil Action." 29 C.F.R. §§ 1614.407 and 1614.408. A civil action for enforcement or a civil action on the underlying complaint is subject to the deadline stated in 42 U.S.C. 2000e-16(c) (1994 & Supp. IV 1999). **If the Complainant files a civil action, the administrative processing of the complaint, including any petition for enforcement, will be terminated.** See 29 C.F.R. § 1614.409.

Failure by an agency to either file a compliance report or implement any of the orders set forth in this decision, without good cause shown, may result in the referral of this matter to the Office of Special Counsel pursuant to 29 C.F.R. § 1614.503(f) for enforcement by that agency.

STATEMENT OF RIGHTS - ON APPEAL
RECONSIDERATION (M0124.1)

The Commission may, in its discretion, reconsider this appellate decision if Complainant or the Agency submits a written request that contains arguments or evidence that tend to establish that:

1. The appellate decision involved a clearly erroneous interpretation of material fact or law; or
2. The appellate decision will have a substantial impact on the policies, practices, or operations of the agency.

Requests for reconsideration must be filed with EEOC's Office of Federal Operations (OFO) **within thirty (30) calendar days** of receipt of this decision. If the party requesting reconsideration elects to file a statement or brief in support of the request, **that statement or brief must be filed together with the request for reconsideration.** A party shall have **twenty (20) calendar days** from receipt of another party's request for reconsideration within which to submit a brief or statement in opposition. See 29 C.F.R. § 1614.405; Equal Employment Opportunity Management Directive for 29 C.F.R. Part 1614 (EEO MD-110), at Chap. 9 § VII.B (Aug. 5, 2015).

Complainant should submit their request for reconsideration, and any statement or brief in support of their request, via the EEOC Public Portal, which can be found at

<https://publicportal.eeoc.gov/Portal/Login.aspx>

Alternatively, Complainant can submit their request and arguments to the Director, Office of Federal Operations, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, via regular mail addressed to P.O. Box 77960, Washington, DC 20013, or by certified mail addressed to 131 M Street, NE, Washington, DC 20507. In the absence of a legible postmark, a complainant's request to reconsider shall be deemed timely filed if OFO receives it by mail within five days of the expiration of the applicable filing period. See 29 C.F.R. § 1614.604.

An agency's request for reconsideration must be submitted in digital format via the EEOC's Federal Sector EEO Portal (FedSEP). See 29 C.F.R. § 1614.403(g). Either party's request and/or statement or brief in opposition must also include proof of service on the other party, unless Complainant files their request via the EEOC Public Portal, in which case no proof of service is required.

Failure to file within the 30-day time period will result in dismissal of the party's request for reconsideration as untimely, unless extenuating circumstances prevented the timely filing of the request. **Any supporting documentation must be submitted together with the request for reconsideration.** The Commission will consider requests for reconsideration filed after the deadline only in very limited circumstances. See 29 C.F.R. § 1614.604(f).

COMPLAINANT'S RIGHT TO FILE A CIVIL ACTION (R0124)


This is a decision requiring the Agency to continue its administrative processing of your complaint. However, if you wish to file a civil action, you have the right to file such action in an appropriate United States District Court **within ninety (90) calendar days** from the date that you receive this decision. In the alternative, you may file a civil action **after one hundred and eighty (180) calendar days** of the date you filed your complaint with the Agency, or filed your appeal with the Commission. If you file a civil action, you must name as the defendant in the complaint the person who is the official Agency head or department head, identifying that person by their full name and official title. Failure to do so may result in the dismissal of your case in court. "Agency" or "department" means the national organization, and not the local office, facility or department in which you work. **Filing a civil action will terminate the administrative processing of your complaint.**

RIGHT TO REQUEST COUNSEL (Z0815)

If you want to file a civil action but cannot pay the fees, costs, or security to do so, you may request permission from the court to proceed with the civil action without paying these fees or costs. Similarly, if you cannot afford an attorney to represent you in the civil action, you may request the court to appoint an attorney for you. **You must submit the requests for waiver of court costs or appointment of an attorney directly to the court, not the Commission.** The court has the sole discretion to grant or deny these types of requests.

Such requests do not alter the time limits for filing a civil action (please read the paragraph titled Complainant's Right to File a Civil Action for the specific time limits).

FOR THE COMMISSION:


Carlton M. Hadden, Director
Office of Federal Operations

January 14, 2025
Date