



U.S. EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION
Office of Federal Operations
P.O. Box 77960
Washington, DC 20013

[REDACTED]
Vernia M.,¹
Complainant,

v.

Megan J. Brennan,
Postmaster General,
United States Postal Service
(Southern Area),
Agency.

Appeal No. 2020002265

Agency No. 1F-946-0045-19

DECISION

Complainant filed a timely appeal with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC or Commission) from the Agency's decision dated January 27, 2020, 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., and Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act), as amended, 29 U.S.C. § 791 et seq.

BACKGROUND

At the time of events giving rise to this complaint, Complainant worked as an AFSM Clerk, 06/EE, at the Agency's Oakland Processing and Distribution Center facility in Oakland, California.

On August 29, 2019, Complainant filed a formal complaint alleging that the Agency subjected her to discrimination on the bases of race (Native American), sex (female), religion (Spiritual), color (not specified), disability, and reprisal for prior protected EEO activity when, on July 8, 2018, she was placed on Emergency Placement and, subsequently, on August 10, 2018, was issued a Notice of Removal for unacceptable conduct for assaulting a Postal Supervisor, a Postal Police Officer, and a Mail Handler, while on official duty.

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.

The Agency dismissed the complaint, pursuant to 29 C.F.R. § 1614.107(a)(2), for untimely EEO counselor contact.² The instant appeal followed.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

EEOC Regulation 29 C.F.R. § 1614.105(a)(1) requires that complaints of discrimination should be brought to the attention of the Equal Employment Opportunity Counselor within forty-five (45) days of the date of the matter alleged to be discriminatory or, in the case of a personnel action, within forty-five (45) days of the effective date of the action.

The record discloses that the latest alleged discriminatory event occurred on August 10, 2018, but Complainant did not initiate contact with an EEO Counselor until May 23, 2019, which is well beyond the forty-five (45) day limitation period. The Commission has consistently held that a complainant must act with due diligence in the pursuit of her claim or the doctrine of laches may apply. See Becker v. United States Postal Service, EEOC Appeal No. 01A45028 (November 18, 2004) (finding that the doctrine of laches applied when complainant waited over two years from the date of the alleged discriminatory events before contacting an EEO Counselor); O'Dell v. Department of Health and Human Service, EEOC Request No. 05901130 (December 27, 1990). The doctrine of laches is an equitable remedy under which an individual's failure to pursue diligently his course of action could bar her claim. Complainant waited over nine (9) months from the date of the latest alleged discriminatory event before she contacted an EEO counselor. While Complainant has submitted a statement addressing her allegations against the Agency, she has failed to provide sufficient justification for extending or tolling the time limit.

Accordingly, the Agency's final decision dismissing Complainant's complaint is AFFIRMED.

² On September 19, 2019, the Agency issued a decision dismissing the complaint for untimely EEO counselor contact. On January 27, 2020, it issued a revised decision dismissing the complaint on that same basis because the prior decision had been returned due to an incorrect address.

STATEMENT OF RIGHTS - ON APPEAL
RECONSIDERATION (M0617)

The Commission may, in its discretion, reconsider the decision in this case if the Complainant or the Agency submits a written request containing arguments or evidence which 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 to reconsider, with supporting statement or brief, must be filed with the Office of Federal Operations (OFO) **within thirty (30) calendar days** of receipt of this decision. A party shall have **twenty (20) calendar days** of receipt of another party's timely request for reconsideration in 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). All requests and arguments must be submitted to the Director, Office of Federal Operations, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Complainant's request may be submitted via regular mail to P.O. Box 77960, Washington, DC 20013, or by certified mail to 131 M Street, NE, Washington, DC 20507. In the absence of a legible postmark, the request to reconsider shall be deemed timely filed if it is received by mail within five days of the expiration of the applicable filing period. See 29 C.F.R. § 1614.604. The agency's request must be submitted in digital format via the EEOC's Federal Sector EEO Portal (FedSEP). See 29 C.F.R. § 1614.403(g). The request or opposition must also include proof of service on the other party.

Failure to file within the time period will result in dismissal of your request for reconsideration as untimely, unless extenuating circumstances prevented the timely filing of the request. Any supporting documentation must be submitted with your 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(c).

COMPLAINANT'S RIGHT TO FILE A CIVIL ACTION (S0610)

You have the right to file a civil action in an appropriate United States District Court **within ninety (90) calendar days** from the date that you receive this decision. 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 his or her 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. If you file a request to reconsider and also file a civil action, **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

May 13, 2020

Date