



**U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission**

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**Press Release**

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# Hobby Lobby To Pay \$50,000 To Settle Disability Discrimination Suit

Arts and Crafts Retailer Refused to Allow Service Dog as Reasonable Accommodation, Federal Agency Charges

ST. LOUIS – Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc., a national arts and crafts retailer, will pay \$50,000 to resolve a disability discrimination lawsuit filed by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the federal agency announced today.

According to the EEOC’s lawsuit, Hobby Lobby violated the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) when it failed to allow a part-time clerk at its Olathe, Kansas store to use her service dog on the job as a reasonable accommodation for her disabilities, including anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The part-time clerk performed cashier duties and assisted in the seasonal, home accents, and floral departments, including stocking shelves and unloading and stocking merchandise on “truck day.” When the clerk sought permission to bring her service dog to the store, the manager asked her to provide medical documentation to support her request, which she did, and she also provided information at the request of corporate human resources. The company’s district manager and human resources decided, without any supporting evidence, the dog would present a safety issue, even though customers were permitted to bring

service and pet dogs to the store. Hobby Lobby ultimately fired the clerk when she advised the company she could not work without her service dog.

Such alleged conduct violates the ADA, which prohibits discrimination based on disability. The EEOC filed suit (EEOC v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc., Civil Action No. 22-cv-02258) in U.S. District Court for the District of Kansas, after first attempting to reach a settlement via its conciliation process.

The three-year consent decree requires Hobby Lobby to pay \$50,000 in monetary damages to the former clerk and to adopt and maintain policies, enact procedures, and provide employee training to ensure future compliance with the ADA. Hobby Lobby must amend its policies to provide that service animals can be considered reasonable accommodations. The decree also requires Hobby Lobby to notify employees of their right to reasonable accommodation under the ADA and periodically report to the EEOC.

“Service animals provide critical assistance to individuals with a range of physical and mental disabilities,” said Andrea G. Baran, regional attorney for the EEOC’s St. Louis District Office. “Allowing service animals into the workplace enables qualified workers to provide for themselves and their families and to productively contribute to their communities and the economy. And, with rare exceptions, it is the law.”

“The ADA requires employers to provide reasonable accommodation to workers with disabilities which allow them to perform the essential functions of their jobs and receive the same privileges and benefits of employment as other workers,” said David Davis, acting director of the EEOC’s St. Louis District Office. “Employers cannot reject service animals, or any other reasonable accommodation, based on unfounded assumptions regarding safety.”

The company’s website states Hobby Lobby is the world’s largest privately-owned arts and crafts retailer, with over 43,000 employees working in over 900 stores in 47 states.

The EEOC’s St. Louis District Office is responsible for receiving and investigating charges of employment discrimination and conducting agency litigation in Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, and a portion of southern Illinois, with area offices in Kansas City, Kansas and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

For more information on disability discrimination, please visit

**<https://www.eeoc.gov/disability-discrimination> (<https://www.eeoc.gov>)**

**/disability-discrimination).**

The EEOC advances opportunity in the workplace by enforcing federal laws prohibiting employment discrimination. More information is available at **www.eeoc.gov (http://www.eeoc.gov)**. Stay connected with the latest EEOC news by subscribing to our **email updates (https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USEEOC/subscriber/new)**.