



U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

Press Release

04-17-2024

Urbana School District No. 116 to Pay \$206,301 in EEOC Age Discrimination Lawsuit

Settlement Follows Court Order Finding the District Limited Compensation of Teachers Based on Age

CHICAGO – Urbana School District No. 116 agreed to pay \$206,301 to settle an age discrimination lawsuit brought by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the federal agency announced today.

According to the EEOC’s lawsuit, the Urbana School District limited the salary increases of Charles Koplinski and a group of other teachers over the age of 45 because of their age, due to a provision of a collective bargaining agreement between the school district and the union representing teachers, Urbana Education Association IEA-NEA.

The Illinois state pension code provides that if a teacher’s final average salary for purposes of calculating pension benefits includes a year in which the teacher received a salary increase of more than 6%, the school district must contribute to the Teacher’s Retirement System to cover the increased pension cost attributable to the salary increase over 6%.

The EEOC’s lawsuit challenged a provision of the collective bargaining agreement limiting the salary increases of teachers who are within 10 years of retirement

eligibility to no more than 6% above their previous year's salary.

The Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) prohibits discrimination because of age against individuals who are age 40 or over, including discrimination with respect to compensation.

The EEOC filed suit in the U.S. District Court for the Central District of Illinois, Urbana Division (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission v. Urbana School District No. 116 and Urbana Education Association, IEA-NEA; Civil Action No. 18-cv-02212) on Aug. 10, 2018, after first attempting to reach a pre-litigation settlement through the EEOC's conciliation process.

On Nov. 7, 2023, the district court granted summary judgment to the EEOC, holding that the collective bargaining agreement provision violated the ADEA by limiting the compensation of teachers age 45 and older because of their age. In addition, the court ordered the district to pay lost wages to a group of 32 affected teachers whose compensation the district did not dispute had been limited by the collective bargaining agreement provision.

The EEOC also sought additional lost wages for some of the same teachers and other teachers that were not determined by the district court's summary judgment decision and would have needed to be determined after a trial. The settlement eliminates the need for a trial on additional damages and provides monetary relief to 40 teachers who lost wages between 2015 and 2020 because of the collective bargaining agreement provision. The district and union agreed to a collective bargaining agreement that eliminated the discriminatory compensation provision starting with the 2020-21 school year.

The court approved a consent decree resolving the litigation on Apr. 17, 2024. In addition to providing lost wages to 40 teachers affected by the discriminatory collective bargaining agreement provision, the three-year decree enjoins the district going forward from limiting the ability of teachers to earn salary increases because of age; enjoins the district from engaging in retaliation against anyone who participated in the case or who has complained about age discrimination; enjoins the district and union from entering into any agreement that limits a teacher's compensation based on age or proximity to retirement eligibility; requires training for district personnel involved in collective bargaining; requires posting of a notice about the resolution of the suit; and requires periodic reporting to EEOC.

“This suit should serve as a lesson to Illinois school districts that they cannot try to limit TRS contributions by capping salary increases for older teachers based on their age,” said Gregory Gochanour, regional attorney for the EEOC’s Chicago District Office. “Federal law prohibits paying teachers over and under the age of 40 differently based on age, just as it prohibits paying women less men or paying workers differently based on race or national origin.”

Amrith Kaur Aakre, district director of the Chicago District Office, said, “In addition to limiting salary increases teachers earned through furthering their education, because of the collective bargaining agreement provision, the district prevented some teachers over age 45 from performing extra paid work for the district, with those opportunities going to teachers younger than 45. Limiting work opportunities based on age is illegal.”

The EEOC’s Chicago District Office is responsible for processing charges of discrimination, administrative enforcement and the conduct of agency litigation in Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa and North and South Dakota, with Area Offices in Milwaukee and Minneapolis.

The EEOC advances opportunity in the workplace by enforcing federal laws prohibiting employment discrimination. More information is available on its website 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) (<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USEEOC/subscriber/new>).

Recent Press Releases from the Chicago District Office

[Jacobson Memorial Hospital to Pay \\$45,000 in EEOC Retaliation Lawsuit](https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/jacobson-memorial-hospital-pay-45000-eeoc-retaliation-lawsuit)
(<https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/jacobson-memorial-hospital-pay-45000-eeoc-retaliation-lawsuit>)

[EEOC Sues Sis-Bro, Inc. for Gender Identity Discrimination and Harassment](https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-sues-sis-bro-inc-gender-identity-discrimination-and-harassment)
(<https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-sues-sis-bro-inc-gender-identity-discrimination-and-harassment>)

Voyant Beauty Will Pay \$75,000 to Settle EEOC Disability Discrimination Lawsuit (<https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/voyant-beauty-will-pay-75000-settle-eeoc-disability-discrimination-lawsuit>)

Recent Press Releases on the Subject of Disability, Age

Gregg Orr Auto to Pay \$325,000 to Resolve Disability and Age Discrimination Lawsuit (<https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/gregg-orr-auto-pay-325000-resolve-disability-and-age-discrimination-lawsuit>)

Ohio Amusement Park to Pay \$50,000 in EEOC Age Discrimination Suit (<https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/ohio-amusement-park-pay-50000-eeoc-age-discrimination-suit>)

Pete's Car Smart to Pay \$145,000 to Settle EEOC Age and Disability Discrimination Suit (<https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/petes-car-smart-pay-145000-settle-eeoc-age-and-disability-discrimination-suit>)