



Press Release

Immediate Release
August 10, 2015

Contact: Nikolas Peterson
206-292-2850

U.S. LABOR DEPARTMENT FINDS FOR HANFORD WHISTLEBLOWER

ORDERS BACK PAY AND EMOTIONAL DISTRESS DAMAGES IN HANFORD WHISTLEBLOWER CASE

“Evidence indicates that Complainant was scrutinized and treated more harshly than other employees.”

Richland, WA: The U.S. Secretary of Labor (DOL) recently [found](#) that a former employee of Hanford’s Waste Treatment Plant (WTP) was wrongfully terminated by Bechtel National, Inc. in 2011 in retaliation for raising safety concerns.

Walt Ford, a Hanford millwright who worked for Bechtel National filed his [complaint](#) with the Labor Department in 2012 after being “laid off” in late 2011. Prior to his termination, Mr. Ford filed numerous reports concerning worker health and safety. DOL found that because he raised these concerns, Mr. Ford “was scrutinized and treated more harshly than other employees,” and that raising the concerns “was a contributing factor in Respondent Bechtel’s layoff decision.” The Energy Reorganization Act (ERA) prohibits retaliation against whistleblowers.



Walt Ford, who has worked at the Hanford site for more than 35 years, has a history of speaking up in favor of safety. In 2000, Ford filed safety complaints with Fluor Hanford, Inc. regarding the Spent Nuclear Fuel Project. In 2004, he testified on behalf of his supervisor, Richard Cecil, who blew the whistle on Fluor. After being hired by Bechtel in 2007, Mr. Ford consistently reported safety concerns, and served as the Chair of Bechtel’s Materials Handling Facility Safety Council, a position he was voted into by his peers.

Nikolas Peterson, Staff Attorney at Hanford Challenge, said: “Hanford Challenge celebrates with Mr. Ford in his recent victory over Bechtel. We are looking to the Department of Energy to take concrete steps to address the culture of hostility at Hanford. We are hopeful that safety will begin to improve as more whistleblowers, like Mr. Ford, receive favorable findings from the Labor Department.”

The Department of Labor ordered Bechtel to pay Mr. Ford back pay as well as \$25,000 in compensatory damages. DOL also ordered Bechtel to expunge Mr. Ford’s employment record of any reference to the exercise of his rights under the ERA. Both parties have 30 days to request a hearing in front of a DOL Administrative Law Judge.

DOL’s finding comes shortly after Senator Ron Wyden (D. OR.) took a public stand in favor of Hanford whistleblowers. Senator Wyden held up the Department of Energy’s recent secretary

nomination, saying “It is time for the culture of hostility against the whistleblowers at Hanford to end.”

Senator Wyden specifically called out the DOE for the firings of Dr. Walt Tamosaitis and Donna Busche, both of whom were terminated after reporting nuclear safety deficiencies, which have since been validated. Both of those cases involved Bechtel and Bechtel subcontractor URS Corporation.

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