

King vs. Charter Communications



Defendant Charter Communications operates a cable television system in Southern California. Charter has a construction department that builds and upgrades the system, lays cable and installs cable equipment. Charter uses outside contractors to perform much of this work. Plaintiff Leila Beth King was a construction coordinator in Charter's construction department. Ms. King supervised contractors that worked for Charter. Defendant Steve Fear was a construction manager and King's immediate supervisor. Defendant Greg Mackney was Mr. Fear's immediate supervisor.

Ms. King alleged that she was sexually harassed by Mr. Fear and that Charter discriminated against her on the basis of her gender. Ms. King alleged she complained of the harassment and discrimination in a memorandum. She also claimed she reported the harassment and discrimination to Mr. Mackney and other supervisors. She alleged that she was wrongfully terminated shortly thereafter in retaliation for having complained about Mr. Fear. She claimed \$258,757.00 in past and future loss of earnings. She also claimed damages for emotional distress and suffering. She further claimed punitive damages.

The defendants denied that Ms. King had been the victim of any sexual harassment or gender discrimination. Charter alleged that Ms. King had been terminated because she failed to perform the material duties of her job. Specifically, Charter contended that Ms. King was a personal friend of a contractor who worked for Charter, and that Ms. King knowingly approved for payment invoices of that contractor when those invoices were false, dishonest and misleading.

The case was tried to a jury. After both sides rested, Judge Alban I. Niles granted a motion for non-suit for the defendants on the hostile environment claim. Judge Niles granted Charter's motion for non-suit on the gender discrimination claim. The only remaining charge at that point was the retaliatory termination claim against Charter in violation of public policy. Judge Niles entered a directed verdict on this claim in favor of Charter.