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DFEH SETTLES SEXUAL HARASSMENT CLAIM AGAINST VFW CORONADO

SACRAMENTO – The California Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH) has settled a complaint with the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 2422 in Coronado, California for sexual harassment, retaliation and failure to prevent discrimination.

The lawsuit filed in San Diego Superior Court alleges that Post Quartermaster Dennis Costa sexually harassed canteen bartender Jennifer Williams over the course of 15 months by, among other things, making lewd remarks about her body and repeatedly attempting to hug her despite her requests for him to stop.

Ms. Williams complained to her supervisor on numerous occasions, however the VFW did not take action to stop the harassment and continued to allow Mr. Costa to remain in the canteen while Ms. Williams was working, according to the complaint.

A separate DFEH complaint filed against the VFW Post 2422 by another canteen bartender, also alleging sexual harassment by Mr. Costa, was resolved privately without involvement by DFEH.

“No employee should have to endure inappropriate and unwelcome sexual remarks and overtures while on the job”, said DFEH Director Kevin Kish. “Employers are liable if they knowingly allow such behavior to go unchecked. DFEH is here to safeguard employees’ rights to a workplace free of this type of predatory behavior.”

The VFW has agreed to develop a sexual harassment policy, provide sexual harassment training to at Post 2422 annually for a period of 3 years, and pay compensation of \$15,000. The VFW will report compliance with the training requirements to the DFEH.

The DFEH is the state agency charged with enforcing California's civil rights laws. The mission of the DFEH is to protect the people of California from unlawful discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations and from hate violence and human trafficking. For more information, visit the DFEH's web site at www.dfeh.ca.gov.