

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Transgender Employee in Louisiana Prevails in Employment Discrimination Case

(LAKE CHARLES, LA, Dec. 7, 2016)—A former employee of an installment loan company in Lake Charles, Louisiana has prevailed in his sex discrimination case. Tristan Broussard filed a federal complaint against the company in April 2015 alleging that he was fired from his job after the company learned that he is a transgender man. The case then proceeded before an arbitrator, who ruled that the company discriminated against Broussard “because of his sex” in violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Courts across the country have repeatedly recognized that Title VII, which prohibits sex discrimination, protects transgender workers. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), which is the primary agency charged by Congress with interpreting and enforcing Title VII, has also made clear that employers cannot fire or refuse to hire employees because they are transgender.

During Broussard’s first week on the job, he was called into a back office and instructed by a company vice president to sign a document stating that his “preference to act and dress as male” was not “in compliance” with the company’s personnel policies.” The arbitrator found that Broussard “involuntarily resigned in order to escape an intolerable and illegal requirement imposed by the corporate office—that he act and dress only as a female.” The order directs the company to pay Broussard more than a year of pay, as well as emotional distress damages.

“I am very happy to have this ruling,” said Broussard. “I just wanted to work hard and do my job and I hope this ruling will allow other employees the chance to do the same.”

Broussard is represented by the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR), the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), Altshuler Berzon LLP, and Delaney, Robb & Rubin.

“No one should have to face employment discrimination or the fear of being fired simply because of their sex,” said Amy Whelan, a senior staff attorney at the National Center for Lesbian Rights.

Attorney Casey Pitts, who is also representing Broussard said, “Transgender workers deserve the same certainty as others that their jobs and livelihood depend not on irrelevant characteristics, but on the quality of their work and the skills they provide.”

SPLC Senior Policy Counsel Scott McCoy added, “Transgender people experience extremely high rates of unemployment and poverty due to widespread discrimination in the workplace. Employers need to understand that there are legal consequences when they fire or harass their employees based on gender identity.”

“This is not only an important win for Mr. Broussard, but also for the entire transgender community in Louisiana,” said Ryan Delaney. “There is no place for discrimination in Louisiana or in our society as a whole.”

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The National Center for Lesbian Rights is a national legal organization committed to advancing the human and civil rights of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community through litigation, public policy advocacy, and public education.

www.NCLRights.org.

The Southern Poverty Law Center, with offices in Louisiana, Florida, Mississippi, Georgia and Alabama, is a nonprofit civil rights organization that combats bigotry and discrimination through litigation, education and advocacy. For more information, see www.splcenter.org

Altshuler Berzon LLP is a law firm that specializes in labor and employment, environmental, constitutional, campaign and election, and civil rights law. The firm’s attorneys appear regularly in courts throughout the country and before the National Labor Relations Board.

Delaney, Robb & Rubin is a Louisiana law firm that focuses on legal issues regarding the LGBT population, including employment law, family law, estate planning, and general litigation.