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Jury Finds Suffolk County Police Department Discriminates Against Pregnant Officers

Decision a triumph for women in traditionally male fields

June 14, 2006 -- The New York Civil Liberties Union and the American Civil Liberties Union today announced victory in a lawsuit charging the Suffolk County Police Department with discrimination against pregnant officers. A federal jury found that the police department discriminates against female officers by denying them access to limited duty positions, like working the precinct desk, during their pregnancies.

"The Suffolk County Police Department forces pregnant officers to choose between their careers and their families," said Cassandra Stubbs, an attorney with the NYCLU Reproductive Rights Project. "Today's jury decision vindicates the rights of our clients and sends a message to all police departments that discrimination on the basis of pregnancy is illegal and unfair."

The NYCLU Reproductive Rights Project and the ACLU Women's Rights Project brought the case, *Lochren v. Suffolk*, to challenge a Suffolk County Police Department policy that disqualifies pregnant officers from precinct desk and other non-patrol jobs that would enable them to continue working for much of their pregnancies. At the same time, the police department fails to provide pregnant officers with fitting bulletproof vests and gun belts that are necessary to perform patrol duties.

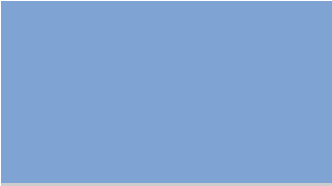
The jury found that the policy itself was discriminatory and that the police department discriminated intentionally against two of the officers. The jury awarded damages to all six plaintiffs.

Over a week of testimony that began on June 5, officers Christine Blauvelt, Sarah MacDermott, Kelly Mennella, Miriam Riera, Patricia O'Brien and Sandra Lochren recalled being forced to use their accrued sick and vacation days -- and, in some cases, to go without pay -- when they were still willing and able to work.

"The jury has vindicated the rights of women in nontraditional jobs across the nation," said Namita Luthra, an attorney with the ACLU Women's Rights Project.

Stubbs and Elisabeth Benjamin of the NYCLU Reproductive Rights Project, Luthra and Lenora Lapidus of the ACLU Women's Rights Project, and cooperating attorneys Linda Neilan and Carmelyn Malalis of Outten & Golden LLP comprised the legal team on the case.

More information about the case is available online [here](#) on the NYCLU site and at www.aclu.org/lochren. NYCLU and ACLU attorneys and staff have posted blog entries and updates about the case during the course of the trial. The entries are available online at <http://blog.aclu.org>.



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