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News

N.J. pays \$1.4M to State Police whistleblower who alleged 'pattern' of racial discrimination

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By [S.P. Sullivan | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com](#)

After spending more than a decade fighting a former state trooper's whistleblower and discrimination lawsuit all the way to the state Supreme Court, New Jersey officials have settled the case for \$1.4 million.

Brian Royster first claimed in 2005 he was denied promotions and given unfair assignments after raising the alarm about racial bias in how state authorities handled misconduct investigations.

The trooper, who had worked in the division's Equal Employment Opportunity Office, said when he tried to report "a pattern and practice" of discrimination to superiors, he was denied promotions and transferring him six times in seven years.

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Brian Royster in 2003.

Royster claimed the unfair treatment caused him undue stress, leading him to develop ulcerative colitis, a type of inflammatory bowel disease. He claimed he asked the State Police to accommodate his illness, but instead was given assignments that only made it worse.

His lawsuit claimed the treatment violated New Jersey's Law Against Discrimination and a state whistleblower protection law.

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A jury awarded him \$1.06 million in 2012, but an appeals court tossed the verdict in 2015. Last year, the state Supreme Court reinstated a partial verdict of \$500,000 plus nearly \$100,000 in interest on the discrimination claims.

The settlement was reached in December and paid in January, state records show, but was not publicly disclosed. The case was formally dismissed in April, and the payment was first reported by NJ Civil Settlements, a website run by open records advocate John Paff.

In an interview Monday, Royster said the Supreme Court victory prompted him to settle with the state over the remaining whistleblower allegations.

"This was never about money," said Royster, who left the force in 2011 and now teaches criminal justice at Saint Peter's University. "This was about holding people responsible."

A spokesman for the state Attorney General's Office, which represented the State Police in the suit, did not immediately respond to a message seeking comment.

Correction: A previous version of this story misstated Royster's retirement date.

S.P. Sullivan may be reached at ssullivan@njadvancemedia.com. Follow him on [Twitter](#). Find NJ.com on [Facebook](#).

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