

Dunkin' Donuts Franchisee Will Pay \$22,000 to Settle EEOC Religious Discrimination Lawsuit

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U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

Company Refused to Hire Applicant Because of His Religion, Federal Agency Charged

ASHEVILLE, N.C. - Citi Brands, LLC, a franchisee of Dunkin' Donuts Bakery, will pay \$22,000 and furnish further relief to settle a religious discrimination lawsuit brought by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the agency announced today.

According to the EEOC's lawsuit, Citi Brands failed to hire Darrell Littrell, a Seventh-Day Adventist who holds the sincere religious belief that he cannot work on his Sabbath, which runs from sunset on Friday until sunset on Saturday. In December 2012, Littrell applied for a donut maker position at the Dunkin' Donuts manufacturing facility owned by Citi Brands in Arden, N.C. On Jan. 3, 2013, the facility's plant manager offered Littrell a donut maker position and told Littrell he would start work the next afternoon, a Friday, at 3 pm. Littrell responded that he could not start work on Friday afternoon because of his faith. The plant manager responded by revoking Littrell's job offer.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits employers from refusing to hire people because of their religion, and requires employers to provide a reasonable accommodation for an employee's sincerely held religious beliefs so long as doing so does not create an undue hardship for the employer. The EEOC filed suit on Sept. 11, 2014 in U.S. District Court for the Western District of North Carolina, Asheville Division (*Equal Employment Opportunity Commission v. Citi Brands, LLC d/b/a Dunkin' Donuts Bakery, Civil Action No. 1:14-CV-00236-MOC-DLH*) after first attempting to reach a pre-litigation settlement through its conciliation process.

In addition to paying \$22,000 in damages to Littrell, the five-year consent decree resolving the lawsuit includes injunctive relief prohibiting the company from discriminating on the basis of religion in the future. The settlement also provides that Citi Brands will implement a policy regarding religious accommodation, conduct annual training for all employees, and report religious accommodation requests to the EEOC. Citi Brands, LLC will also post a copy of its policy on religious accommodation in all of its North Carolina restaurants and facilities.

"Religious discrimination is a continuing problem in the American workplace," said Lynette A. Barnes, regional attorney for the EEOC's Charlotte District Office. "Under federal laws, employers have an obligation to balance employees' needs and rights to practice their religion with the conduct of the

employer's business. Where there is a minimal impact on the business, those religious needs must be accommodated."

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