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News Releases

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CHAMBERS FILES \$2.2 MILLION CLAIM AGAINST NATIONAL PARK SERVICE — Two-Year Anniversary of U.S. Park Police Chief's Fight for Her Job

Washington, DC — Citing attempts by the National Park Service to destroy documents that would exonerate her, Teresa Chambers is seeking monetary damages for wrongful acts by top officials, according to filings released today by Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER). Two years ago, in December 2003, Chambers was stripped of her badge and law enforcement credentials and suspended from duties as Chief of the U.S. Park Police, following an interview she gave to The Washington Post concerning a shortage of officers to patrol parks and parkways.

"I want and fully expect to be restored as Chief of the United States Park Police," stated Chambers. "As the second anniversary of these events loomed, I was forced to file a compensation claim or waive that option forever."

One year ago today, Chambers filed an appeal with the civil service court, called the Merit Systems Protection Board, asking for a review of a recommended decision upholding her termination in July 2004. That recommended decision threw out two of the six administrative charges lodged against her. During the ensuing months, no decision has been reached on her appeal. The board, however, is under no deadline for issuing a decision.

Meanwhile, Chambers' lawyers have opened two new challenges. One is a federal lawsuit under the Privacy Act seeking to force the production of a positive performance evaluation covering the period during which she was later charged with substandard performance and conduct. Testimony from the former head of Park Service's human resources department indicates that a positive evaluation of Chief Chambers was prepared just weeks before she was suspended. The Park Service has yet to produce that document.

The other is a filing this month for damages under the Federal Tort Claims Act. The initial claim is for \$1.4 million in compensatory damages and another \$750,000 for damaged reputation and emotional distress. In addition, Ms. Chambers may bring damage claims against named individual officials for actions taken beyond their authority. Without access to her evaluation and other records of her performance, Chambers contends that she is, in essence, blackballed from future law enforcement work.

“The case of Teresa Chambers will determine whether federal civil servants can be fired by political appointees simply for telling the truth,” stated PEER General Counsel Richard Condit, who filed both of the new federal claims on Ms. Chambers’ behalf. “No matter how long it takes, we will leave no stone unturned in restoring Teresa Chambers as the Chief of the U.S. Park Police.”

Chambers’ damage claim will be filed in federal court if the Park Service refuses to pay damages or provide reinstatement within six months.

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