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## Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility

*Protecting Employees Who Protect Our Environment*



### News Releases

For Immediate Release: December 16, 2004

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#### **CHAMBERS FILES APPEAL FOR IMMEDIATE REINSTATEMENT** — Petition Cites More Than 40 Legal Errors Made by Judge

Washington, DC — Teresa Chambers today filed a legal action to overturn her removal as Chief of the U.S. Park Police. Her 239-page petition cites more than 40 legal errors made by the judge who upheld Chief Chambers' termination this past fall, according to a copy of the petition released today by Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER).

In an October 6th ruling, an administrative judge for the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board issued "an initial decision" that Chief Chambers' firing was justified due to statements she made in an interview with The Washington Post. The judge did, however, throw out two of the six administrative charges that the Department of Interior had leveled against Chief Chambers.

By today's petition, Ms. Chambers places the remaining administrative charges before the full Merit Systems Protection Board (a three member review panel). The MSPB may reinstate Chambers, remand the matter back for further hearings or uphold the termination.

"The wheels of justice turn slowly but with each passing week Teresa Chambers' case grows stronger," stated PEER General Counsel Richard Condit, noting the recent anniversary of Chief Chambers' suspension where she was stripped of her badge, credentials and side arm and marched out of Interior headquarters under armed escort. "We will not rest until Teresa Chambers is restored as Chief of the United States Park Police."

The legal issues on appeal include whether a federal employee can be fired for telling the truth in the absence of explicit rules barring disclosure. The case marks the first time that a new category of "law enforcement sensitive" information has been used as a basis for discipline. In addition, since the case involves First Amendment rights and the right of federal employees to communicate with Congress, there will be separate federal court challenges available as soon as her MSPB remedies are exhausted.

The Chambers' appeal also raises new matters that arose out of her hearing in September, including:

- Paul Hoffman, a former Dick Cheney aide, conducted a secret investigation within Interior, in violation of due process. Significantly, Hoffman never sought to question Chambers;

- National Park Service Director Fran Mainella testified that she would reinstate Chambers. Contrary to usual practice, Mainella was prohibited from deciding the matter; and
- NPS Deputy Director Don Murphy prepared but never delivered a performance evaluation for Chief Chambers that omitted mention of the issues he later raised as the basis for her termination.

"The Department of Interior's actions against Chief Chambers classically illustrate the adage 'Oh what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive,'" Condit added.

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