

Employer Must Pay \$115K to Transgender Woman Over Bathroom Dispute

A Minnesota judge has ruled that a national check-print company must pay \$115,000 and apologize to a transgender “woman” for banning “her” from the women’s bathroom.

Deluxe Financial Services Inc. will pay the settlement to complainant, Briney Austin, and change its policies for transgender employees, as part of a sex discrimination and harassment lawsuit brought by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

“This settlement underscores EEOC’s commitment to securing the rights of transgender individuals under Title VII in the federal courts,” said EEOC General Counsel David Lopez in a statement. “This is our second such resolution, and we hope that employers will take notice and begin to take proactive steps to prevent and eliminate discrimination against their transgender workers.”

In 2011, Austin told her supervisor that she was transgender and began to present herself as a woman at work, reports *Christian Post*.

According to the complaint, the Deluxe office, located in Arizona, refused to let her use the women’s restroom and supervisors and co-workers created a hostile work environment for Austin, saying “hurtful epithets and intentionally using the wrong gender pro-nouns to refer to her.”

Austin alleged that the company refused to change her name on company records—arguing that sex reassignment was required to change her name—even though the company denied her health insurance coverage for transition-related care, *BuzzFeed*

News reports.

Austin also argues that she was denied severance pay and COBRA benefits when the company laid off employees.

The Phoenix-based office has since closed.

The company has denied that it violated Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 or that it treated Austin unlawfully, but has agreed to take steps to improve the work climate for transgender employees, according to *BuzzFeed News*.

In an apology to Austin, which was included with the settlement agreement, Deluxe Financial Services senior vice president of human resources Julie Loosbrock writes, "We want to ensure you that we have made changes to our internal policies, including how we treat transgender employees' requests to change biographical information or use a restroom commensurate with their gender identity."