
IS IT WORTH IT?

My name is Ken Snyder, and in 2010 I was the victim of employment discrimination – simply because I have been serving, and currently serve in the Kansas Air National Guard. But you wouldn't know it based on the lack of attention my case has generated.

After being out of the service for over 16 years I enlisted in the Kansas Air National Guard in 2003. After a deployment from late 2009 to early 2010 I accepted a job offer from the Kansas City, Kansas Board of Public Utilities (BPU) and set out to learn a new facet (to me) of electrical/electronic maintenance. I was told my work showed good attention to detail and I had completed work that would have other crews at BPU occupied for quite some time in the future. This is not just my opinion; it can be seen on the streets of Kansas City, Kansas – something that BPU cannot deny. They tried, however – but through my own investigation I was able to prove all of their accusations were lies. I have my entire story (as much as I can disclose) online at <http://www.bpu168days.info> for anyone who wants to read it.

While I had to accept an inferior offer by BPU I have wanted this to be far more than my own personal battle. Many current members of the military have been discriminated against in civilian employment, are being discriminated against, or will be discriminated against in the future. It's now a well-documented fact that the Department of Labor has a reputation of poor work when it comes to investigating claims of discrimination regarding the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, also known as USERRA. In my case, the Department of Labor found "no merit" in my case, but by using their own files and the evidence I already had on hand I was able to secure an attorney that was successful in obtaining the Offer of Judgment we eventually received.

Since pushing BPU to the point where they proposed that Offer of Judgment I have tried to get this injustice exposed to a larger audience. My hope has been that the Department of Labor would have to take a long, hard look into how they handle USERRA cases. Based on calculations performed by a professor at Washburn University in Topeka, Kansas this discrimination has already cost me well over a quarter of a million dollars in lost wages and benefits. I sent an e-mail to my federal representative – I know he got it because I now get regular e-mails from him on how he's doing everything *but* look into this matter. I sent e-mails to every major national news network, as well as several smaller outlets. I even tried contacting local media. All of my efforts were met with complete silence. My Representative and the media are more than willing to cover the most trivial of stories but would prefer to turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to a member of the community who not once, but twice decided to voluntarily sign a contract to "protect and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic." *Gee, thanks for your support.*

All of what I've wrote so far leads me to the title of this paper: is it worth it? That's a question I keep asking myself, and the answer is not what it should be. In less than a year I will once again be asked whether or not I want to reenlist in the Air National Guard. I have been asked in the past about enlisting in the military, especially after being out for as long as I was. Young men and women want to know my experience with serving in the National Guard – what should I tell them? Your country supports you? BPU showed me how much they care about people in the military (that dare to apply for a position with them and still serve), my Representative won't even respond to me, and the media all turn a blind eye and a deaf ear. I may not have much left, but I will not sacrifice my integrity for anyone – I let my story speak for itself.

Stories are now being published on how there will be more reliance on Reserve and National Guard units for ongoing and future operations. This will mean more situations where these “citizen soldiers” will be required to leave civilian employment – how will they be treated for their sacrifice? When the call goes out for men and women to take a stand, perhaps they should ask “is it worth it?” Is it worth it to stand up for people like those at BPU? Is it worth it to stand up for people like my Representative? Is it worth it to stand up for people like those in the media, who won’t take a stand against an injustice like what I’ve encountered? *You tell me.*

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