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UNANIMOUS JURY RULES IN FAVOR OF KAUAI WARDEN

HONOLULU – Attorney General Doug Chin announced that a federal jury this afternoon unanimously determined that Kauai Community Correctional Center (KCCC) warden Neal Wagatsuma and the state public safety department (PSD) were not liable in a lawsuit brought by a former KCCC social worker. The jury also found that the warden and PSD acted appropriately in their supervision of an award-winning Lifetime Stand (LTS) program and the KCCC work furlough program. The jury's verdict disposes of all of the plaintiff's claims against the warden and the State.

Plaintiff Carolyn Ritchie sued in Hawaii federal court, claiming the warden forced female prisoners to watch violent pornography, confess sexual secrets in front of male prisoners, and that female inmates were not allowed to participate in the work furlough program. Ritchie also alleged that she was retaliated against and forced to leave her job as a result of her complaints.

At trial, the State presented evidence instead that the warden did not show pornographic movies to female inmates, did not force anyone to disclose information about their sexual past, did not shame any inmates, and that both male and female inmates were allowed to participate in the work furlough program.

Attorney General Doug Chin said, "The jury verdict exonerates Warden Wagatsuma and the State. This warden made efforts to rehabilitate inmates. The jury recognized this and ruled in his favor."

The State also presented evidence during trial that the Ritchie had previously been disciplined on multiple occasions for breaking prison rules when she worked there. The jury's verdict rejected Ritchie's claims that she was the target of any retaliation.

State Public Safety Director Nolan Espinda said, "We thank the jury for their time and diligence in this matter."

Federal district judge Leslie Kobayashi presided over the 16-day jury trial. Deputy Attorneys General Nelson Nabeta and Bosko Petricevic represented the State defendants. Ritchie was represented by attorney Margery Bronster.

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