

Monday, May 5, 2008

# O.C. Fair Housing CEO sues board

D. Elizabeth Pierson alleges directors are trying to force her out of agency

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The Orange County Register

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Santa Ana The director of the Orange County Fair Housing Council is countersuing the nonprofit's board, saying they violated her rights and are scheming to oust her from her position by pursuing a probe into "baseless and scurrilous accusations."

D. Elizabeth Pierson – the subject of a lawsuit by the board for allegedly interfering in with an outside probe into her management of the agency -- says she is being harassed, discriminated and retaliated against by the organization's board of directors, her attorney William Weinberger said Monday.

In a lawsuit filed Thursday in Orange County Superior Court, Pierson says the board "engaged in underhanded, deceptive and bad faith tactics."

Pierson, who began working for the agency in 1991 as a student intern, says the board refused to disclose allegations against her made in two letters sent to the board in November and December, the suit says. The letters allege Pierson is often absent from the office, and engaged in nepotism and favoritism.

The board decided to pursue an outside investigation of the claims, and sued Pierson – alleging she was interfering in that probe. Pierson counters the board should have submitted its complaints to a mediator instead of pursuing litigation.

The lawsuit also contends the board revoked Pierson's right to work at home because of her disability due to neurological problems caused by salmonella poisoning in 2004, and demanded in April that she work in the office every day.

Pierson is seeking a temporary retaining order to curtail the alleged harassment, as well as unspecified damages. The case has been assigned to Superior Court Judge Frederick Horn – who is also handling the board's litigation against Pierson.

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