

SUPPORT GOV. DEAL & HIS IMPORTANT VETO

Oppose the new bill forcing Georgia campuses to allow guns

Paid for by Everytown for Gun Safety Action Fund

Black Georgia GOP staffer who was fired scores partial win in court

Greg Bluestein

Updated March 22, 2017 Filed in [Georgia Republicans](#).

f t ↗ 21



Georgia GOP chair John Padgett. Bob Andres, bandres@ajc.com

A federal judge allowed a key part of a racial discrimination lawsuit that’s hobbled the Georgia Republican Party to move forward, ruling that a former employee’s claims that she was improperly fired after she complained can go to trial.

U.S. District Judge Charles Pannell's order on Tuesday clears the way for a jury trial in the long-running case involving Qiana Keith, the former staffer who [sought punitive damages against the state party](#). The 2014 lawsuit has been an embarrassment for the state GOP, which has [struggled to attract donors](#) amid mounting legal bills.

Keith said in the 2014 lawsuit that she overheard co-workers refer to her with a racial slur and humiliate her while she was working as an executive assistant to GOP chair John Padgett. She contends she was fired after complaining about her co-workers' behavior.

Pannell's order found there was not enough evidence for a jury to conclude that Padgett created an "actionable hostile work environment" or prove that he was racially motivated when he fired Keith.

But it found there was enough evidence to let a second claim go that she was improperly fired in retaliation after she complained about her treatment in the office go to trial. The judge found the Georgia GOP's "shifting reasons" for her firing enough evidence to let the complaint stand.

Keith attorney Kimberly Worth declined comment, and the Georgia GOP did not immediately return requests seeking comment.

Keith's complaint and other legal problems have complicated the Georgia GOP's fundraising ability. [Recently-filed campaign finance reports show](#) the state party finished January with \$38,000 in the bank and \$317,000 in debt, and some donors have said they refuse to help fund the party's legal bills.

The party's finances have dominated the debate to replace Padgett, who is not seeking another two-year term in June. The top four contenders for the seat all pledge to raise significant cash to revive the party's financial health.

Share this:

Be the first to like this.

Related