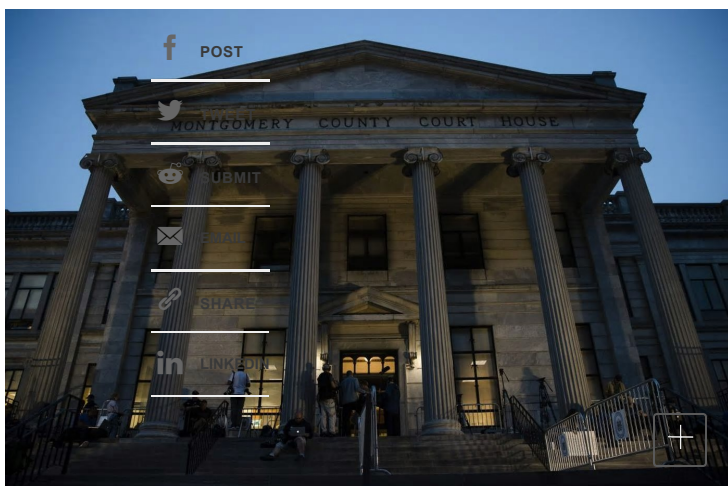


Fired Montgomery County public defender awarded \$225,000 in age-discrimination case

by [Sam Wood](#), Updated: December 28, 2018



MATT ROURKE / ASSOCIATED PRESS

A part time public defender who claimed his boss fired him because he was the oldest employee in the office was awarded nearly \$225,000 earlier this month by a federal jury who also reinstated him to his job.

Dennis Caglia, 62, has worked for 33 years at the Montgomery County Public Defender's Office in Norristown. He was drawing a part-time salary of \$40,000 with full medical benefits when he was told he would have to start working full time. Caglia said he was "offered crumbs" to do so, according to court documents.

According to court papers, Chief Public Defender Dean Beer offered Caglia a junior-level position at \$47,000 annually if he wanted to stay on. Caglia, who ran his own law office across the street, said he was the only one of 11 part-time defenders given the option of taking the low paying job or leaving. He refused the offer saying that \$47,000 was what the office paid a public defender with only 12 years of experience.

In testimony, Beer said Caglia was the only part-time employee receiving full benefits and that the decision was solely for budgetary reasons. Caglia countered that another part-time defender with less tenure was offered a position with more power and money.



Caglia filed an age-discrimination case in Dec. 2016 with the Equal Employment Opportunity Office in a complaint that also alleged retaliation. Four days later, Beer allegedly fired Caglia.

On Dec. 18 after two hours of deliberation, a federal jury in Philadelphia sided with Caglia, and awarded \$160,000 in damages for emotional distress, \$31,290 in back pay, and about \$33,000 in interest and miscellaneous damages.

POST