

FRIDAY, MARCH 6, 2026

LA jury awards \$2.7 million in bias case against Sheriff's Department

A jury found the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department discriminated against a police psychologist and retaliated against her after she complained about being passed over for promotion.

Douglas Saunders

Daily Journal Staff Writer

A Los Angeles jury awarded \$2.7 million plus attorneys' fees to a police psychologist who said the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department discriminated against her and retaliated after she complained about being passed over for promotion.

Dr. Christine Jones had worked for Los Angeles County since 2007 and had 10 years of management experience in the bureau. While serving as acting director of the Psychological Services Bureau and preparing to interview for the permanent role, Commander Andrew Rosso removed her and gave the position to a male consultant — her subordinate with no management experience — bypassing at least two more qualified women. *Christine Jones v. County of Los Angeles et al.*, 22STCV33483 (L.A. Super. Ct., filed Oct. 13, 2022).

Aaron L. Osten, Molly McKibben, and Francisco Yeveerino of Greene Broillet & Wheeler represented the plaintiff. Osten said Thursday in an interview with the Daily Journal that Jones held a unique position as a law enforcement psychologist in a specialized bureau within the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, working with deputies on mental health issues and helping them cope with the traumas they experience daily.

She had been doing that work for 13 years when Alex Villanueva was elected sheriff in December 2018.

"This was a textbook case of the good ole boys' club with a glass ceiling," Osten said. "Their attitude was, 'She could have stayed as an assistant to this man.' Every woman should just be the assistant coach, never the head coach, and be OK with that."



OSTEN

"She's the highest-qualified psychologist in the bureau; the director is on his way out, and she's next in line," Osten continued. "She thought, 'This is my opportunity to take on the director role.' Under Villanueva, she had no chance."

Osten said the sheriff's administration replaced Jones with an unqualified man who was not even on the eligibility list.

"He wasn't even supposed to be interviewed for the job. They gave her no reason," Osten said. "She filed a complaint saying this was discriminatory. Rather than investigate or do anything to help her, they forced her out. They promoted the man two more times to solidify him in the role that should have been hers."

After Jones complained of gender discrimination, the county did not investigate, the complaint alleges. Instead, while she was on medical leave, the department removed her from its computer systems, took her county vehicle, laptop, and office keys, and filled her position without notice. She was later reassigned to the county's Medical Examiner-Coroner's Office, which the complaint said effectively destroyed her ability to practice and advance in police psychology.



MCKIBBEN

She later resigned.

Her legal team argued the conduct amounted to legally actionable discrimination and whistleblower retaliation under California law, a distinction central to the trial.

"They defended this case with the unfortunate playbook of continuing to discriminate against her in the courtroom," Osten said. "Rather than address the policies and procedures meant to protect her, they



YEVEERINO

told the jury she was paranoid, emotional, and overreacting — which is exactly what we hear every day about women in the workplace and the whole reason these laws exist. The jury saw right through it."

The jury's award includes lost wages, future earnings and noneconomic damages. Attorneys' fees will be determined separately.

The county was represented by Thomas C. Hurrell of Hurrell LLP, who was not available for comment.

"The jury saw an injustice — retaliation and discrimination, two claims that are very difficult to prove," Osten said. "In the fight for credibility, the jury looked at both sides and decided who made more sense. The county's story didn't add up. They had no legitimate reason for what they did to this woman, and that spoke volumes."

douglas_saunders@dailyjournal.com