

Houston law firm faces pregnancy discrimination suit

Wayne Wright, a personal injury law firm in Houston, faces charges it fired an employee after she told them she was expecting a child.

According to an EEOC lawsuit, a case manager had worked at the firm since 2004 and had consistently received favorable performance evaluations. She claims all that changed in 2011 when she told the law firm she was pregnant. The firm allegedly informed her that it could not accommodate her maternity leave and told her to choose her last day on the job.

She claims she asked for clarification and was terminated two weeks later. She filed a complaint with the EEOC, but the two sides failed to resolve the dispute through its conciliation process.

The EEOC's suit seeks back pay and punitive and compensatory damages. The EEOC believes the case is so strong that it has taken the extraordinary step of asking for a declaratory judgment against the firm.

Note: The Pregnancy Discrimination Act bars employers from treating employees differently because they are or wish to become pregnant. When disciplining a pregnant employee, ask if you would have taken the same action if not for the pregnancy. That's what the court will ask.