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## Democrat OPINION

6A TUESDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2007

EDITORIAL

### Just does not seem right

It is not our usual policy to interject ourselves into a legal battle between an employer and an employee. But when the employer happens to be a tax-supported public entity such as a school, well, then we must speak out.

As you might know by now, the Liberty Central School Board of Education voted to terminate the contract of longtime Middle School Librarian Angela Page, who has not been able to work at the school the past three scholastic years because of a case of multiple chemical sensitivities (MCS) brought on by her 13-year exposure to mold caused by a leaky roof at the Middle School.

For those board members who voted to dismiss her the issue was clear: Page has not worked in three years, has not lived up to her contract and therefore continuing to pay her \$80,000-plus salary and benefits could not be justified.

A state mediator last month recommended that the district did not have to keep employing Page, as she is unable to carry out "her duties in an efficient and effective manner." Further, the mediator's report said, creating a new full-time position elsewhere within the school or allowing Page to work from home (as is her wish) "would place an undue hardship on the district."

Though she had the backing of the Liberty Faculty Association and no doubt the moral support of the community, Page's fate was sealed when the state mediator gave the board legal cover to fire her.

Problems existed with the new Middle School structure since it opened in 1991. At one point, the faculty union and district sought help from the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health after 20 Middle School teachers filed paperwork with health complaints.

Two years ago the federal agency noted the health hazards at the school, including persistent leaks, mold and rotted wood.

In Page's case, the state Workers' Compensation Board did rule that she have chemical hypersensitivity due to the presence of mold. Medical specialists confirmed that her condition was caused by her workplace conditions.

It simply does not add up.

Here, an employee gets fired because of illness brought on by workplace conditions.

Her entire life, including her relationship with her children and friends, has suffered dramatically because she needs a special living environment and is adverse to even the most innocent scents normal people are unaware of.

Maybe the school could not reach agreement with Page on alternate ways she could be employed.

And, as an institution, it was bound to appeal the compensation settlement that she had won.

But does this all add up to doing the right thing?

Not in our minds it doesn't.

*The Liberty School Board may have legal sanction, but its decision lacks morality*