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# Ex-financial officials sue College of DuPage, alleging politics led to firings

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Chicago Tribune

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Former finance officials sue College of DuPage, claiming political retaliation

DECEMBER 1, 2015, 9:41 AM

**T**wo former financial administrators at the [College of DuPage](#) are suing the school for wrongful termination, claiming they were fired because they campaigned against Chairwoman Katharine Hamilton's agenda in the past election.

Former Treasurer Thomas Glaser and former Controller Lynn Sapyta filed suit Tuesday in federal court in Chicago, accusing Hamilton of political retaliation and conspiring with others to oust them from their positions in September. The lawsuit seeks unspecified damages and asks that both be given back their jobs.

In addition to Hamilton, the complaint names the college, its board of trustees and interim President Joseph Collins as defendants. The suit accuses the defendants of causing Glaser and Sapyta "great mental anguish, humiliation, degradation" and physical suffering as result of their firing.

The lawsuit marks the second wrongful termination complaint from senior managers since Hamilton became the board leader in April. Former President Robert Breuder filed suit against the board of trustees in October, accusing Hamilton and three other trustees of firing him as part of a personal vendetta.

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College of DuPage spokesman Randall Samborn had no immediate comment on the lawsuit.

The suit disputes Hamilton's repeated assertions that mismanagement by Glaser and Sapyta cost the school millions of dollars and led to fraud. Rather, it describes the pair as reformers who saved the state's largest community college from financial disarray and implemented safeguards to

protect its money.

"Tom and Lynn have been devastated by the defendants' actions," said attorney Shelly Kulwin, who is representing Glaser and Sapyta with attorney Peter Lubin. "The trial in this case will show that irresponsible and reckless allegations make for juicy headlines, but they wither in the bright light of the court of law."

Glaser and Sapyta — whose salaries were \$232,112 and \$163,828 respectively — were fired in September for, among other things, violating the school's investment practices and accounting problems tied to the college's radio station and high-end restaurant, Waterleaf.

Both also were accused of using school resources to campaign against three candidates endorsed by Hamilton in the April election.

In one email, Glaser suggested that a December 2014 community survey about the college was done for political reasons. Though the college said the survey was meant to get feedback on its performance, Glaser said the school wanted to gauge how recent negative publicity would affect the upcoming election.

Sapyta is accused of violating the school's ethics policy by using the college's email system to solicit votes on behalf of candidates who opposed Hamilton's agenda.

The lawsuit describes both incidents as "isolated" and says they do not justify termination.

Instead, the suit contends that Hamilton fired the pair because they openly stumped against her slate during their private time. According to court documents, Glaser and Sapyta spoke out publicly against Hamilton's reform agenda at campaign events, put up yard signs and financially backed her opponents.

"Defendant Hamilton developed a political animus against (Glaser and Sapyta) because (they) failed to support Hamilton's political agenda for COD, which she was pursuing, in significant part, to further her own political career," the lawsuit states.

Glaser's and Sapyta's fates seemed sealed after the heated spring election in which the three Hamilton-back candidates swept into office and gave her control of the board. Hamilton had openly criticized both administrators at public meetings and on the campaign trail, and she had promised changes to the college's leadership if her candidates were elected.

Hamilton also frequently mentioned Glaser's past work as a top aide to Cook County President John Stroger and Sapyta's previous employment with the CTA. According to the lawsuit, those

references were an attempt to portray the pair as "Cook County Democratic hacks loyal only to tax-and-spend government," an image that would rankle voters in the traditionally Republican DuPage County.

Lubin said the administrators were fired because of their perceived political affiliation.

"Hamilton as the Complaint alleges wrongfully targeted Sapyta and Glaser for termination because they used to work for Democratic administrations in Cook County and campaigned against her in the recent board of trustee election," Lubin said in a statement.

Collins ultimately opted to fire Glaser and Sapyta, a decision that relied heavily upon on an internal audit that found that the school's investment practices did not comply with its policies. The college lost more than \$2 million in one prohibited investment, for example, though the school is attempting to recover some of that money.

A Chicago-based financial management firm recently determined that about 73 percent of the college's investment portfolio was not in compliance, a level far greater than an internal auditor found. The portfolio was valued last fall at \$274 million.

Glaser and Sapyta also are accused of failing to maintain financial controls over the college's radio station, where an employee for years allegedly stole from the college, and over its high-end restaurant, which lost more than \$2 million over a four-year period as senior administrators spent hundreds of thousands of public dollars on meals and drinks. The restaurant is now closed.

Since Collins placed Glaser and Sapyta on leave in June, an outside firm has been handling the college's day-to-day finances and reviewing its financial controls.

"Hopefully the board of trustees and acting interim President Collins will choose to do the right thing here and fairly resolve this case instead of wasting additional taxpayer dollars and exorbitant legal fees defending it," Kulwin said.

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