

# Pittsburgh Attorney Obtains Defense Verdict in Religious Discrimination Case in Western District of Pennsylvania

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Pittsburgh partner Trisha A. Gill obtained a defense verdict in a Title VII religious discrimination suit filed in the US District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania. The plaintiff alleged that as a condition of her employment as a sales representative with the Defendant, a home remodeling company, she was required to undergo a training program that contained religious references and also required her to have certain religious beliefs. She claimed that after she objected to participating in the religious training she was constructively discharged.

The Defendant maintained first, that she was not afforded protection of Title VII as she was an independent contractor, not an employee. Even if she was an employee, the training program, while having references to religion and religious figures, did not require her to endorse or subscribe to any particular religious belief. Further, the Defendant maintained that she voluntarily left her position with the company and was never terminated.

The court bifurcated the liability issues having a trial first on the question of whether the plaintiff was an employee or independent contractor. After six days of trial testimony, the jury returned a verdict for the Defendant finding that plaintiff was an independent contractor and not afforded protection under Title VII.

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