

South Dakota Jury Awards \$400,000 in Gender Discrimination Case



A South Dakota jury has ruled in favor of Ruth Esperance, a former Black Hills District Ranger, in her gender discrimination lawsuit.

The jury delivered the verdict on Saturday, awarding Esperance \$400,000 in damages after a five-day trial.

The case dates back to 2018 when Esperance was reassigned from her role as Mystic District ranger to a position with reduced authority and responsibilities.

Her lawyers argued that this reassignment, deemed “unheard of” by former forest service human resources officials, was the result of gender discrimination.

They contended that then-Forest Supervisor Mark Van Every consistently disregarded the ideas and concerns of Esperance and her female colleagues while favoring her male co-workers’ suggestions.

Representing Esperance, Dan Gebhardt from the Solomon Law Firm in Washington, D.C., expressed his hope that this ruling would prompt the forest service to address gender discrimination issues and ensure that women

working there have their voices heard. He urged the forest service to implement policies and procedures to curtail the trend of gender discrimination.