



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**DOJ Announces \$1.2 Million Settlement of Racial Discrimination  
Lawsuit in Pocomoke City, Maryland**

*The Plaintiffs, Three Black Police Officers, Were Represented by Wiley,  
Washington Lawyers' Committee, and ACLU of Maryland*

Washington, DC – A \$1.2 million U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) settlement of a civil rights lawsuit in Maryland was lauded today by Wiley, the Washington Lawyers' Committee, and the ACLU of Maryland, whose clients in the high-profile case – three Black police officers – alleged they were subjected to racial discrimination and retaliation in Pocomoke City, MD.

The DOJ [announced](#) last week that it had reached the settlement with the Worcester County Sheriff and the state of Maryland in *Savage et al. v. Pocomoke City et al.*, a Title VII case involving alleged civil rights violations in the Pocomoke City Police Department. The settlement in this long-running, hard-fought case resolves allegations that a former law enforcement officer was subjected to a racially hostile work environment, and that he and two others in the police department, who had supported him in his claims, were retaliated against after he complained about the discrimination.

"Subjecting a law enforcement officer to egregious racial slurs and epithets, then retaliating against him and others who supported him for reporting the misconduct, strikes at the heart of the race discrimination prohibitions that Congress enacted when it passed Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964," Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Eric S. Dreiband said in a DOJ press release.

"While racial discrimination is a serious injury for so many people in this country, it's the retaliation that hurt me and my colleagues so much," said Franklin Savage, the former officer who settled with the Sheriff and State and was one of three plaintiffs who settled with Pocomoke City. "But this settlement helps me know that – even at great cost – I did the right thing. Bottom line, challenging race discrimination must be encouraged, not punished."

"The road to justice for Detective Savage, Chief Sewell, and Lt. Green has been long, just like the overall struggle for racial justice in Worcester County, where the lingering impacts of segregation still deny the rights of Black residents," said Deborah Jeon, Legal Director of the ACLU of Maryland. "We hope that this victory for Black officers who bravely challenged entrenched racism and retaliation in Pocomoke City, sends a strong message to white leaders that the status quo will no longer be tolerated."

“Franklin Savage’s courage in standing up to the egregious racism in the Eastern Shore’s law enforcement apparatus cost him his career,” said Dennis Corkery, counsel at Washington Lawyers’ Committee. “This important settlement helps to bring him and the other officers justice and will help to reform a culture of racism and retaliation that persists in policing.”

“We are incredibly pleased with this outcome and the incontrovertible affirmation from the Justice Department that intentional race discrimination and retaliation occurred,” said Theodore A. Howard, Wiley’s full-time Pro Bono Partner. “No settlement can erase the suffering endured by our clients – Detective Savage, Chief Sewell, and Lieutenant Green. But we hope the government’s decision and oversight in this case will lead to more equitable treatment for Black law enforcement officers in Pocomoke City and other communities in the future.”

In addition to reaching the settlement with the Worcester County Sheriff and the state of Maryland, the DOJ announced a deal it had reached in December 2019 with Pocomoke City. Both resolutions of the case stemmed from the alleged mistreatment of former Pocomoke City Police Officer Franklin Savage.

The case began in 2016, when a federal civil rights lawsuit was jointly filed by Wiley, the WLC, and the Maryland ACLU. The complaint challenged a conspiracy of race discrimination and retaliation among Worcester County and Pocomoke City’s white officials targeting three Black police officers, including Pocomoke City’s first Black police chief. The legal team achieved positive results on behalf of the three officers, obtaining significant monetary awards for each of them. Pocomoke City, Worcester County, and the State of Maryland are also subject to a court-approved Consent Decree, monitored for compliance by the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, with respect to their hiring, promotion, and retention practices affecting minority police officers.

The plaintiffs were represented by a comprehensive legal team including Wiley’s [Theodore A. Howard](#), [Charles C. Lemley](#), [Brian Walsh](#), [Craig Smith](#), [Kendra Perkins Norwood](#), [Madeline J. Cohen](#), and [Moshe B. Broder](#); Dennis Corkery of the Washington Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs (WLC); and Deborah Jeon and Sonia Kumar of the ACLU of Maryland.

News regarding the DOJ settlement was reported by [Law360](#).

The DOJ news release can be read [here](#).

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*The ACLU of Maryland works to ensure that all people in the state of Maryland are free to think and speak as they choose and can lead their lives free from discrimination and unwarranted government intrusion. The organization is guided in its work by the United States Bill of Rights and the Maryland Declaration of Rights. The Maryland ACLU acts without partisanship to achieve these goals.*

*Founded in 1968, The Washington Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs works to create legal, economic and social equity through litigation, client and public education and public policy advocacy. While we fight discrimination against all people, we recognize the central role that current and historic race discrimination plays in sustaining inequity and recognize the critical importance of identifying, exposing, combatting and dismantling the systems that sustain racial oppression. For more information, please visit [www.washlaw.org](http://www.washlaw.org) or call 202.319.1000. Follow us on Twitter at [@WashLaw4CR](#).*

*Founded in 1983, Wiley is a dominant presence in the nation’s capital. With more than 240 lawyers, the firm has earned international prominence by representing clients in complex, high-stakes regulatory, litigation, and transactional matters. Many of Wiley’s lawyers and public policy advisors have held high-level positions in the White House and federal agencies and on Capitol Hill. The firm represents a wide range of clients—from Fortune 500 corporations to trade associations to individuals—in virtually all industries.*