

Last Chance New Year Sale Ends 1/3 **\$9⁹⁹ / YR.**

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Westchester to pay ex-employee \$380K over firing

[Mark Lungariello, mlungariel@lohud.com](#) Published 10:11 a.m. ET March 26, 2017 | Updated 3:17 p.m. ET March 27, 2017

Dhyalma Vasquez claimed she was targeted because of a political feud.



(Photo: File photo/The Journal News.)

Westchester County will pay a former employee \$380,000 to settle a lawsuit after she claimed she was fired because of a political feud.

Dhyalma Vasquez, who worked for the Department of Social Services, said in a 2013 suit that she was targeted because of her affiliation with the county Independence Party, which was tussling with County Executive Rob Astorino.

The county Board of Legislators approved the settlement at their meeting March 20. Vasquez will get nearly \$85,000 in damages, \$150,000 in backpay and \$115,000 in attorney fees.

Westchester also agrees to recommend to the New York State Employees Retirement System to credit Vasquez for 24 months of retroactive service credits, from January 2014 to December 2015.

SUIT: Ex-investigator may settle with Westchester for \$380K (</story/news/politics/2017/02/07/westchester-settles-dhyalma-vazquez-lawsuit/97591962/>)

NYC: Westchester's enigmatic development office closing (<http://Westchester%20to%20close%20NYC%20economic%20development%20office>)

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Named in the lawsuit were the county, Astorino and Deputy Social Services Commissioner Phil Gille. She claimed she was demoted and transferred to White Plains from the department's Mount Vernon field office because she had complained about discriminatory practices in the department.

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After her position was eliminated in the county budget, she amended the lawsuit in February 2014 and added new claims that she was fired because of her vocal opposition to Astorino's re-election bid in 2013. Vasquez was then vice chair of the Independence Party, which endorsed the county executive's first run for office but did not do so in the second election.

The Independence Party's feud with Astorino extended to a 2013 federal lawsuit in which party officials claimed that the county executive's campaign fraudulently attempted to "hijack" the party's nomination by having Astorino loyalists join the party in sufficient numbers to endorse him.

That claim was dismissed in 2015 and the appeal was dismissed in 2016.

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In Vazquez's lawsuit, a federal judge dismissed most of her claims, specifically her individual claims against Astorino and Cline. The case had been scheduled to go to trial last month on the remaining claim, that Vazquez's First Amendment civil rights were violated when she was written out of the county budget.

Jorge Fitz-Gibbon contributed to this report.

Twitter: @marklungariello (<http://twitter.com/marklungariello>)

Correction: An earlier version of this article listed that the lawsuit involving the Independence Party was still on appeal. The appeal had been dismissed February 2016.

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