



Online Ethics Center
FOR ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

Inez Austin - The Continuous Battle with Westinghouse: The Current Situation

Description

A summary of Inez Austin's current situation.

Body

Following the settlement she was offered in late 1996, and her rejection of the settlement as documented in her December 9, 1996 letter to Secretary of Energy Hazel O'Leary, Inez Austin decided to pursue legal action against the Westinghouse Corporation and the United States Department of Energy. But as of right now, she has failed to make much progress in the lawsuit.

"It's moving along slowly," she said. "Right now, we have no timeline."

Apparently, most of the involved parties have not been too anxious to get things moving along more quickly.

"It's a company town," said Austin of Richland, Washington. "People are paid a lot to keep quiet."

In addition, Inez has had great difficulty finding a new job. She has sent out hundreds of resumes, but she rarely even receives a formal rejection letter.

"They [Westinghouse Hanford] told me that they'd 'make sure I never work again,'" said Austin, "and so far, that's been true."

This is not to suggest that the harassment has ended. Even though Inez no longer works at Hanford, she is still subjected to threatening phone calls and other forms of harassment. In the meantime, the Hanford facility has continued to have their share of problems. They have regularly failed to meet cleanup deadlines, prompting several congressional hearings. And on June 8, 1998, Washington Governor Gary Locke announced that he intends to sue the federal government over its failure to move fast enough in cleaning up Hanford.

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