

SYSTEM NEWS

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SETTLEMENT REACHED IN FORMER WUTC-FM EMPLOYEE LAWSUIT

Attorneys for the University of Tennessee and Justin Gilbert of Gilbert McWherter Scott & Bobbitt, PLC, attorneys for a former employee of UT Chattanooga's WUTC-FM, have reached a settlement of \$50,000 in a lawsuit filed by Jacqui Helbert in response to her dismissal from the radio station.

"I am satisfied with the settlement and look forward to the next chapter of my life. I harbor no ill will toward WUTC, UTC, or anyone associated with them," said Helbert, who was dismissed from her position on March 21.

"UTC is glad to move forward and wishes Ms. Helbert well. She has a bright future," said Terry Denniston, UTC Chief of Staff.

According to UT Chattanooga Chancellor Steve Angle, "UTC values both the editorial independence of WUTC and high journalistic standards of ethics. I have made that commitment clear to both the University community and to WUTC employees. Further, our commitment to both issues can be seen in the WUTC Editorial Integrity Policy." <http://wutc.org/wutc-editorial-integrity-policy>.

"I hope that WUTC will continue to address and clarify the editorial independence of WUTC and its staff," Helbert said. "That way, the ability of reporters, especially those who work for University-owned media stations, to report accurate news is unencumbered by popular opinion and marketing. These matters are critically important to me, to a free press, and I will continue to advocate for editorial integrity and firewalls between the editorial and marketing functions of university-owned radio stations."

Helbert's lawsuit claimed that she was fired in retaliation for her involvement in a story about the Tennessee legislature's so-called "Bathroom Bill" that would have required students to use public restrooms corresponding to their sex on their original birth certificate, but which did not pass. The suit further alleges that UTC gave in to legislative pressure and terminated her employment.

The University denied any liability, and the settlement resolves Helbert's claim.

The settlement calls for Helbert to be paid a total of \$50,000, funded by UT Chattanooga. Neither Helbert, her attorney, nor University officials will comment on the settlement itself beyond this media statement.

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