



1.5M award in bias suit

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A Wyandanch man who had been hired by an insurance company and promised a promotion if he successfully installed a complex computer program was awarded \$1.5 million by a jury that found he was instead demoted and then fired because he is black.

Larry McCord, 48, said he felt vindicated by the jury finding that he had been a victim of racial discrimination.

His attorney, Steven Morelli, said the verdict sends a message that discrimination

based on race, sex or age will not be tolerated by juries or by society.

McCord had been working at another company in 1985 when he was lured to the National Benefit Life Insurance Co. to install complicated software. He took a pay cut when he went to National Benefit Life, but was told that if the software was in place within a year he would be rewarded with a raise and promotion.

Instead, he said, the other members of the team he headed were given raises and he was demoted. On Aug. 11, 1986, McCord's birthday, he

was given a birthday card and was told that he was being fired.

"I'm finally vindicated," McCord said Friday. "Imagine you were the man who stepped on the moon first and they said you were black so it didn't count. . . I put in the most complicated insurance system at the time, I saved the company millions of dollars, and did it in half the time [allotted]. My reward was, 'I don't need you' anymore," he said.

Morelli said the promotion went to a white woman who had never worked in the insurance field and didn't have

a college degree.

James O'Gara, the attorney for the company, could not be reached for comment.

McCord had more than 10 years' experience with insurance companies and a college degree. McCord is now an aide to Suffolk County Legislator David Bishop. He's also a second-year student at Touro Law School.

McCord said the jury award will help make up for the lost earnings he suffered over the years and will help pay for the education of his four children. Two are now in college and a third is in medical school.