



Air Force Vet Refused Job Based on HIV Status

June 11, 2009

An Air Force veteran was denied a position as a baggage screener with the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) because he is HIV positive. On June 11, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) filed a complaint against the TSA on his behalf, demanding that the organization rescind his disqualification from the job.

“I was looking for a way to be able to serve my country once again and to supplement my income through this financial crisis with the possibility of changing my career,” Michael Lamarre said in a statement. “But after a lengthy interview and screening process, I was told that I am incapable and unworthy because I have HIV.”

He continued: “I am a long-term HIV survivor, and it has never interfered in my ability to work. As I have learned having lived with HIV for nearly 20 years, people with HIV need to be able to make a living and support themselves just like everyone else as well as have the right to serve their country.”

From 1984 to 1987, Lamarre worked in intelligence for the National Security Administration while serving in the Air Force. He has lived with HIV for 19 years and currently has an undetectable viral load. After submitting his most recent lab results for a required physical—including a form from his doctor stating that HIV would not interfere with his baggage screener duties—he was denied the job.

Comprehensive Health Services, the firm administering the physical, said that HIV makes him more susceptible for viral infections, and that denying him the position was for his own good.

“In the nearly 20 years that Michael Lamarre has lived with HIV, it has never affected his ability to work,” said Robert Rosenwald, director of the LGBT Project of the ACLU of Florida, in a statement. “HIV discrimination is always wrong, but it is especially shameful when government is behind the discrimination. I hope the TSA recognizes the harm it is causing Michael and our country by refusing to hire a highly motivated and qualified employee.”

