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Legal fight ends for Disney IT workers who trained foreign replacements

By GABRIELLE RUSSON
ORLANDO SENTINEL | MAY 09, 2018



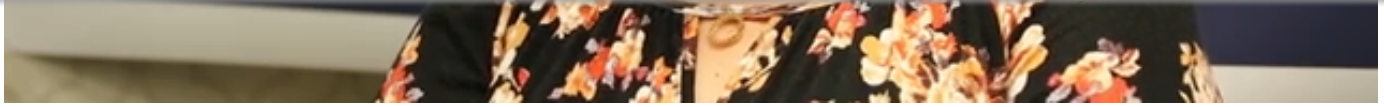
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Walt Disney World technology workers who were required to train foreign workers before they were fired from the company hold a press conference to ask for justice after their failed lawsuits.



The attorney who has filed several unsuccessful lawsuits after 250 Disney IT workers lost their jobs to Indian nationals in 2014 acknowledged Wednesday it is a legal fight she cannot win.

"We have lost," Sara Blackwell said during a news conference in Orlando. "Unfortunately, we lost because it's legal."

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The information technology workers' grievances became national headlines after some were forced to train their replacements in 2014, putting a spotlight on the issue of H-1B visas. Some of the Americans were rehired for other jobs within the company, while others became unemployed or decided to retire.

Blackwell filed four unsuccessful lawsuits at the state and federal levels and after the most recent was dismissed by the state, she said she will not plan to refile again. In one of the cases, a federal judge said Disney was following existing immigration laws.

"As we have said all along, these lawsuits were completely baseless," a Disney spokeswoman said in a statement Wednesday.

Blackwell vowed to keep fighting for the issue by advocating and creating public awareness, she told reporters at the news conference.

Under President Donald Trump — whom Blackwell accused of not doing enough to help the Disney workers — immigration and

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A primary avenue for skilled immigrants to enter the United States, the H-1B visa is for specialty workers, and is heavily used in the tech industry. About 85,000 visas are issued annually in a lottery system. Some critics argue they are a way for companies to avoid hiring U.S. citizens. Trump himself has said H-1B recipients shouldn't even be considered skilled.

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An Associated Press investigation in 2017 found that some H-1B workers — particularly in jobs such as computer science — are often paid less than their American counterparts.

Blackwell also voiced frustration with politicians, including Trump, for not doing more to create change.

"We truly believed in him," said Blackwell, a Republican Sarasota attorney who, according to the Sarasota Herald-Tribune, was considering running for a state House seat in 2016 and spoke about the Disney fight at Trump rallies during his campaign. "What has Trump done? Nothing."

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The Associated Press contributed to this report. Got a news tip? grusson@orlandosentinel.com or 407-420-5470; Twitter, @GabrielleRusson

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