

Costco meat supervisor gets \$100,000 for alleged Hawthorne Business Center confinement, interrogation

LOS ANGELES -- A former Costco meat department supervisor who alleged he was confined for several hours in a room at the Hawthorne Business Center and told by his bosses to give a written confession to selling meat beyond the permitted dates was awarded \$100,000 today for his emotional distress.

A Los Angeles Superior Court jury also awarded the plaintiff, Ruben Calvillo, \$1,000 each in punitive damages from two Costco managers, Zarur Figueroa and George Cranmer.

The panel found each acted with malice by falsely imprisoning him on Nov. 17, 2010.

During their interrogation of Calvillo in a windowless office, Cranmer and Figueroa tried to extract a false confession from him regarding the sales of meat beyond their label expiration dates, according to the plaintiff's court papers. He later developed symptoms that caused him to believe he might be suffering a heart attack or a stroke, his court papers stated.

He was later released and drove himself to get medical attention, according to his court papers.

Defense attorneys denied Calvillo was ever coerced or confined against his will.

Calvillo, 29, was later fired. He had worked for Costco since he was 18, said his attorney, Brent Buchsbaum.

Calvillo sued Costco Wholesale Corp., Cranmer and Figueroa in June 2011. Unlike a standard Costco warehouse, a Costco business center caters to businesses rather than households and sells meats and other items in large quantities.

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