

U.S. Supreme Court Extends Title VII's Retaliation Protections to Employees "Closely Associated" with a Complaining Party

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In yet another expansion of the scope of retaliation protections under Title VII, on January 24, 2011, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously held that an employee who is a "close associate" of another employee who files a discrimination claim may sue the employer for retaliation.

Eric Thompson was fired, allegedly in response to a sex discrimination complaint his fiancée (also an employee of the same company) filed with the EEOC. Three weeks after the EEOC contacted the company to investigate the fiancée's Charge, Thompson (who was not interviewed in the investigation) was fired. Although the company claims he was fired for poor performance and for writing a derogatory memo about the company's management practices, he claims he was fired in retaliation for his fiancée's Charge. The trial court and (eventually) the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that Thompson could not bring a retaliation claim because he did not personally oppose an unlawful employment practice or assist in an investigation. [Read more ...](#)