

CJ Griffin Quoted in NorthJersey.com on “Huge Win” for Transparency and Accountability In New Jersey

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CJ Griffin, Director of the Justice Gary S. Stein Public Interest Center at Pashman Stein Walder Hayden, was quoted in the *NorthJersey.com* article, “In ‘huge win’ for transparency, NJ Supreme Court says settlement agreements are public.” The article discusses a recent New Jersey Supreme Court decision in the case of *Libertarians for Transparent Government v. Cumberland County*, in which Griffin represented the plaintiff. Plaintiff sought, pursuant to the New Jersey Open Records Act (OPRA), the settlement agreement of a correctional officer who had been allowed to retire in good standing despite his admission that he had “inappropriate relationships” with two inmates and brought contraband into the county jail. In a unanimous decision, the Supreme Court reversed the Appellate Division and ruled that settlement agreements which include a person’s name, title and “date of separation and reason therefor” are government records subject to public access under OPRA, with appropriate redactions.

“Public agencies across the state will no longer be able to hide the settlements they enter into with public employees who have engaged in misconduct,” said Attorney CJ Griffin, who litigated the case. “This is a huge win for transparency and government accountability,”

Paff and the libertarian group filed suit after they uncovered meeting minutes that conflicted with the summary, and the case was argued by Griffin, who specializes in Sunshine Law cases.

Griffin said the court’s ruling should mean greater accountability.

“The public will be able to see whether the employee was allowed to negotiate away major misconduct and retire or resign on good terms,” she said.

She added that access is particularly important when it comes to law enforcement.

At times, police officers charged with misconduct are able to bargain to better terms that might let them separate with a payout, she said.

"Now the public can see those terms and hold public officials who agree to them accountable," Griffin said.

To view the full article, [click here](#).