

## **Judge orders fire departments to offer jobs**

**December 8, 2006**

BOSTON—A federal judge has ordered Massachusetts fire departments to offer jobs to about 50 minority firefighter applicants she ruled had been affected by a discriminatory hiring exam.

Judge Patti Saris ruled in August that a cognitive ability test given to firefighting candidates around the state in 2002 and 2004 discriminated against minority applicants. Four black men from Lynn had filed the discrimination lawsuit. She ruled that the test evaluated skills that had little to do with firefighting.

On Thursday she ordered fire departments to offer jobs to minority candidates who applied in 2002 and 2004 and would have gotten jobs if it weren't for the exam, and also ordered back pay.

The ruling would cover about 50 people, mostly in Boston, according to the Black Society of Vulcans, which represents black and Hispanic firefighters, and joined in the lawsuit along with the NAACP.

Karen Miller, the society's president, said some of those people have taken other jobs or moved away, but many probably would want the jobs. Boston Fire Department officials declined to comment on the ruling. The original plaintiffs were brothers Jacob and Noah Bradley; Jared Thomas and Keith Ridley.

"They are especially excited about this and looking forward to getting hired," their attorney, Shannon Liss-Riordan, told The Boston Globe.

Jacob Bradley has been hired by the Lynn Fire Department.

Liss-Riordan said a list of the eligible candidates would be release soon.

State officials revised the firefighter test, required under civil service laws, before giving it again this past summer. But lawyers in the case said they will look over those results to be sure it did not again unfairly disqualify minorities.

Saris also ordered the state to come up with a diversity recruiting plan to be put in place within 60 days.

