# UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

LORENZO TAYLOR, 1301 SOUTH ARLINGTON RIDGE ROAD #401 ARLINGTON, VA 22202	) ) Civil Action No )
Plaintiff,	, )
<b>v.</b>	) ) )
COLIN L. POWELL, in his official capacity as	<i>)</i> )
United States Secretary of State,	)
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE	)
2201 C STREET, N.W.	)
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20520	)
Defendant.	) ) )

## COMPLAINT, REQUEST FOR DECLARATORY JUDGMENT, <u>AND JURY DEMAND</u>

Plaintiff Lorenzo Taylor files this Complaint against Defendant Colin L. Powell in his official capacity as United States Secretary of State, and alleges the following:

#### PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

- 1. This is an action brought pursuant to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. §§ 791, et seq., for redress of unlawful discrimination on the basis of disability.
- 2. As explained in more detail below, this action stems from the refusal of the United States Department of State (hereinafter the "Department") to hire Mr. Taylor as a Foreign Service Officer because he is infected with the human immunodeficiency virus

(hereinafter "HIV"). To remedy this violation of the Rehabilitation Act, Mr. Taylor seeks declaratory and injunctive relief, compensatory damages, and attorneys' fees and costs.

- 3. Mr. Taylor learned that he was infected with HIV in March 1985. In the eighteen years since his initial diagnosis, he has remained asymptomatic, and has suffered no serious illnesses or AIDS-defining opportunistic infections. His only HIV-related medical needs are semi-annual checkups and a daily regimen of medication. Mr. Taylor is in good health.
- 4. Mr. Taylor has a long record of public service, having worked for the Department from 1979 to 1988, and for the United States Department of Health and Human Services since 1999. He has long wanted to be a Foreign Service Officer and still hopes to serve his country in that capacity.
- 5. Mr. Taylor applied for a position as a Foreign Service Officer in July 2001, passed the requisite written and oral examinations, and received a conditional offer of employment from the Department in November of that year. After Mr. Taylor disclosed his HIV status during a physical examination, however, the Department informed him that he would not be granted the medical clearance required for service abroad. Given his good health, Mr. Taylor sought a waiver of the denial of medical clearance, but his request was denied in July 2002. After timely contacting an Equal Employment Opportunity (hereinafter "EEO") counselor in August 2002, Mr. Taylor filed a formal administrative complaint which produced no relief.
- 6. The Department rejected Mr. Taylor's application for employment pursuant to its policy against hiring HIV-positive candidates for positions as career Foreign Service Officers. Indeed, during Mr. Taylor's medical examination in December 2001, he received a

form stating that "[b]ecause new applicants for the Foreign Service must be worldwide available (Class 1), those who are HIV positive will not be eligible for employment." Similarly, in August 2001, the Department publicly issued a "media note" stating that "those [Foreign Service Officer candidates] testing positive are not offered employment in the Foreign Service." In contrast, the Department will retain Foreign Service Officers who test positive for HIV while employed but who exhibit no signs of immune suppression. Such individuals are granted Class II medical clearance and approved for limited overseas duty.

- 7. The Department's discriminatory policy against job applicants who are HIVpositive reflects the widespread misunderstanding and fear of HIV that persist throughout American society even in the face of greatly expanded scientific knowledge about the virus, its modes of transmission, and treatment of those who are infected. The course and treatment of HIV has changed dramatically since the Department first conceived its policy banning HIV- positive candidates two decades ago. Today, thanks in part to significant medical breakthroughs, people living with HIV like Mr. Taylor often live long and healthy lives with few, if any, symptoms of HIV. Nonetheless, the Department clings to the antiquated assumption that all people living with HIV, regardless of their actual physical condition, are especially fragile and require near-constant monitoring and medical attention.
- Mr. Taylor belies this stereotype. He has never suffered a serious HIV-related 8. illness, has never been hospitalized for an HIV-related illness, and has traveled throughout the world without medical incident. By concluding that Mr. Taylor's health is too poor to permit overseas work, the Department has capitulated to an outdated and inaccurate generalization about people with HIV.

- The Department's discriminatory refusal to hire qualified candidates like Mr. 9. Taylor violates the Rehabilitation Act and the Department's own regulations, both of which mandate that candidates be assessed on the basis of their individual qualifications rather than according to stereotype. By refusing to grant Mr. Taylor the medical clearance or waiver that his good health warrants, the Department violated federal law.
- The Department's discriminatory treatment of Mr. Taylor also ran afoul of 10. Secretary Powell's own public exhortation not to discriminate against people with HIV. In a speech to international business leaders in June 2002, Secretary Powell urged corporate leaders to "implement fair employment practices to ensure there is no discrimination related to a person's HIV status - no stigmatization. They are just like anyone else. This is one of those lessons we have to get to all employers and nations around the world." Less than one month after issuing this plea for equal treatment, Secretary Powell's Department finally informed Mr. Taylor that it would not offer him a position in the Foreign Service.

#### JURISDICTION AND VENUE

- This Court has jurisdiction pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331 and 1343(a)(4). 11. This action is authorized pursuant to 29 U.S.C. §§ 791 and 794, and 29 C.F.R. § 1614.203. This court has jurisdiction to issue a declaratory judgment pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 2201 and 2202.
- Venue is proper pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(e) because Defendant Colin L. 12. Powell resides in this judicial district and a substantial part of the events or omissions giving rise to this complaint occurred in this judicial district.

#### **PARTIES**

- Plaintiff Lorenzo Taylor is a citizen of the United States and resides in 13. Arlington, Virginia. At all times relevant hereto, Mr. Taylor has been a person living with HIV, which is a disability within the meaning of the Rehabilitation Act.
- Defendant Colin L. Powell is the United States Secretary of State, head of a 14. federal department in this judicial district that is subject to the Rehabilitation Act. The United States Foreign Service is an agency of the State Department and is therefore prohibited, pursuant to the Rehabilitation Act, from discriminating against otherwise qualified people with disabilities in the terms or conditions of employment.

#### **FACTS**

- Mr. Taylor realleges paragraphs 1-14 of this Complaint as if fully set forth 15. herein.
- 16. On information and belief, a Foreign Service Officer's duties include performance of the following functions: establishing and maintaining relations with the government of the Officer's country of residence; advising policymakers on economic and political matters in the country of residence, and communicating with the United States regarding events in the country of residence.
- 17. On information and belief, according to the current policy of the Department, Foreign Service Officer candidates must pass written and oral examinations, receive a security clearance, and receive a Class I medical clearance or a Class II medical clearance via a medical waiver before being offered employment.

- On information and belief, the Department has a policy of denying HIV-18. positive candidates Class I medical clearances.
- On information and belief, the Department has a corresponding policy of 19. denying HIV-positive candidates Class II medical clearances or medical waivers.
- On information and belief, the Department has a policy of retaining Foreign 20. Service Officers who test positive for HIV while employed but exhibit no signs of immune suppression. Such individuals are granted Class II medical clearance and approved for limited overseas duty.
- Mr. Taylor was diagnosed as having HIV in March 1985. As a result of his 21. HIV infection, Mr. Taylor is a person with a disability within the meaning of the Rehabilitation Act. Additionally, the Department regards Mr. Taylor as a person with a disability within the meaning of the Rehabilitation Act.
- For a number of years, Mr. Taylor has been on a regimen of anti-retroviral 22. medications to manage his HIV. The combination of medication that he currently takes keeps Mr. Taylor's viral load (the measure of HIV in his system) at very low or undetectable levels, and his CD4+ T-lymphocyte cell count (the measure of his immune system health) in a healthy range. Mr. Taylor receives his medication by mail in 90-day supplies. He currently sees his HIV physician only for routine monitoring of his condition. Eighteen years after his initial diagnosis as HIV-positive, Mr. Taylor remains in good health, shows no signs of immune suppression, and is not at risk for HIV-related complications.
- In the years since he learned he was HIV-positive, Mr. Taylor has never 23. suffered a serious HIV-related illness, has never been hospitalized because of his HIV, and has never suffered any AIDS-defining illness. He has engaged in full-time graduate study and

work, successfully performing in positions requiring extensive travel and long hours. Upon receiving the appropriate vaccinations and immunizations, Mr. Taylor has traveled without medical incident to Brazil, China, Costa Rica, Germany, Russia, Senegal, South Africa, Turkey, and Zimbabwe.

- After being recruited to apply for a position in the Foreign Service, Mr. Taylor 24. formally applied to become a Foreign Service Officer on or about July 14, 2001. He passed the required written and oral examinations and received a conditional offer of employment dated November 13, 2001.
- On or about December 27, 2001, Mr. Taylor presented for his pre-employment 25. medical examination and was given a form stating that "[b]ecause new applicants for the Foreign Service must be worldwide available (Class 1), those who are HIV positive will not be eligible for employment." During this examination, Mr. Taylor disclosed his HIV status to a Department doctor.
- 26. On or about January 7, 2002, Dr. John Triplett, who was then Chief of the Department's Medical Examination Clinic, told Mr. Taylor that he would not be eligible for employment as a Foreign Service Officer because he was HIV-positive. Dr. Triplett informed Mr. Taylor that he could seek a medical waiver from the Department's Employment Review Committee (hereinafter "ERC"), but that two other candidates with HIV had sought and been denied waivers in the recent past despite having excellent credentials and unique skills.
- 27. By letter dated January 17, 2002, Tamale Walton, a Human Resources Specialist at the State Department, formally informed Mr. Taylor that he had been denied the necessary medical clearance.

- 28. By letter dated January 25, 2002, Mr. Taylor requested a medical waiver from the ERC. In his request, Mr. Taylor asked the Committee to conduct an individualized assessment of his application instead of relying on the Department's blanket policy against hiring HIV-positive candidates. The ERC denied the requested waiver in a letter dated July 15, 2002.
- On or about August 28, 2002, Mr. Taylor timely contacted the Department's 29. Office of Civil Rights (hereinafter "OCR") to initiate EEO counseling. On or about November 7, 2002, Meta R. Fitzgerald, the EEO Counselor assigned to Mr. Taylor's case, issued a letter to Mr. Taylor informing him that he had the right to file a formal administrative complaint with the OCR.
- On or about November 13, 2002, Mr. Taylor filed a formal administrative 30. complaint with the OCR. By letter dated December 2, 2002, the OCR accepted Mr. Taylor's complaint for investigation.
- On or about June 2, 2003, the OCR completed its investigation, offering no 31. conclusions regarding the allegations in Mr. Taylor's complaint.
- By letter dated June 2, 2003, the OCR informed Mr. Taylor of his right to file a 32. civil action in this matter.
- 33. Mr. Taylor has exhausted the administrative remedies available to him under the Rehabilitation Act. All conditions precedent to the institution of this suit have been fulfilled.

#### **COUNT ONE - REHABILITATION ACT § 501**

- Mr. Taylor realleges paragraphs 1-33 of this Complaint as if fully set forth 34. herein.
- Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act, 29 U.S.C. § 791, prohibits the federal 35. government from discriminating against otherwise qualified people with disabilities in the terms or conditions of employment, and requires the federal government to take affirmative action to employ people with disabilities who can perform, with or without reasonable accommodation, the essential functions of a particular job. This prohibition and mandate similarly protects people whom the federal government regards as disabled.
- Due to his HIV status, Mr. Taylor has a physical impairment that substantially 36. limits one or more of his major life activities, such that he is a person with a disability within the meaning of the Rehabilitation Act.
- 37. Additionally, the Department regards Mr. Taylor as a having a physical impairment that substantially limits one or more of his major life activities, such that he is a person with a disability within the meaning of the Rehabilitation Act.
- 38. Given his job skills and physical condition, Mr. Taylor is capable of safely performing all the essential functions of a Foreign Service Officer without accommodation. The Department therefore violated section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act when it denied Mr. Taylor a Class I medical clearance or medical waiver on account of his HIV status.
- 39. In the alternative, given his job skills and physical condition, Mr. Taylor is capable of safely performing all the essential functions of a Foreign Service Officer with reasonable accommodation such as, but not limited to, granting Mr. Taylor a Class II medical clearance or waiver. The Department violated section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act when it

denied Mr. Taylor such accommodation and discriminated against him on the basis of his HIV status.

The Department violated the Rehabilitation Act by failing to offer Mr. Taylor a 40. position and by failing to accommodate Mr. Taylor in violation of section 501's requirement that federal employers take affirmative action to hire otherwise qualified candidates with disabilities.

#### **COUNT TWO - REHABILITATION ACT § 504**

- Mr. Taylor realleges paragraphs 1-40 of this Complaint as if fully set forth 41. herein.
- 42. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, 29 U.S.C. § 794, prohibits federal programs or activities from discriminating against otherwise qualified people with disabilities in the terms or conditions of employment.
- Due to his HIV status, Mr. Taylor is a person with a disability within the 43. meaning of the Rehabilitation Act, and is regarded as such by the Department.
- 44. Given his job skills and physical condition, Mr. Taylor is capable of safely performing all the essential functions of a Foreign Service Officer without accommodation. The Department therefore violated section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act when it denied Mr. Taylor a Class I medical clearance or waiver solely on account of his HIV status.
- 45. In the alternative, given his job skills and physical condition, Mr. Taylor is capable of safely performing all the essential functions of a Foreign Service Officer with reasonable accommodation such as, but not limited to, granting Mr. Taylor a Class II medical clearance or waiver. The Department violated section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act when it

denied Mr. Taylor such an accommodation and discriminated against him solely on account of his HIV status.

#### REOUEST FOR DECLARATORY JUDGMENT

- Mr. Taylor realleges paragraphs 1-45 of this Complaint as if fully set forth 46. herein.
- **4**7. An actual and present controversy exists between Mr. Taylor and the Department relating to their respective legal rights and duties:
- Mr. Taylor contends that Defendant Colin Powell and the Department have (a) discriminated against him on the basis of his disability in violation of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and that Mr. Taylor has been damaged thereby, and that, as a result, Mr. Taylor is entitled to relief from this Court; and
- On information and belief, Defendant and the Department deny these (b) contentions, and aver that the Department's policy of declining to hire people living with HIV as Foreign Service Officers does not violate federal law.
- 48. A judicial declaration among the parties is necessary and appropriate at this time in order that they promptly may ascertain and enforce their respective rights and obligations.
- 49. Mr. Taylor is entitled to a declaratory judgment that the Department has discriminated against him on the basis of disability; that the Department's policy of refusing to hire HIV-positive applicants as Foreign Service Officers violates the Rehabilitation Act; and that Mr. Taylor has been damaged thereby, and, as a result, is entitled to relief from this Court.

#### **DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL**

50. Plaintiff Lorenzo Taylor demands a trial by jury on all issues.

#### **RELIEF REQUESTED**

51. Mr. Taylor realleges paragraphs 1-50 of this Complaint as if fully set forth herein.

WHEREFORE, Mr. Taylor respectfully requests the following:

- a) a trial by jury;
- b) that this Court enter a declaratory judgment that the Department has discriminated against Mr. Taylor on the basis of disability; that the Department's policy of refusing to hire HIV-positive applicants as Foreign Service Officers violates the Rehabilitation Act; and that Mr. Taylor has been damaged thereby, and, as a result, is entitled to relief from this Court;
- c) that this Court permanently enjoin the Department from enforcing its policy against hiring HIV-positive Foreign Service Officer candidates, including Mr. Taylor;
- d) that this Court order the Department to grant Mr. Taylor a Class I or II medical clearance or waiver; or to hire Mr. Taylor as a Foreign Service Officer with appropriate reasonable accommodation;
- e) that this Court order the Department to pay Mr. Taylor the value of his lost wages and benefits, as well as compensatory and punitive damages as authorized by the Rehabilitation Act;
- f) that this Court order the Department to pay attorneys' fees and costs as authorized by law; and

g) that this Court order any such further relief as it deems just and proper.

Respectfully submitted, this 3dd day of September, 2003.

Jonathan Givner (California Bar # 208000; New York Bar # 4090650) Hayley Gorenberg (New York Bar # 2545754) LAMBDA LEGAL DEFENSE AND EDUCATION FUND, INC. 120 Wall Street, Suite 1500 New York, NY 10005-3904 (212) 809-8585

Kathleen A. Behan (D.D.C. Bar #429072) Amy Y. Spencer (D.D.C. Bar #463931) Leslie M. Hill (D.D.C. Bar #476008) Cara Petersen (D.C. Bar # 476990) ARNOLD & PORTER 555 Twelfth Street, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20004-1206 (202) 942-5000 JS-44

### CIVIL COVER SHEET

(Rev. 2/01 DC)		· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	I Z =					
I (a) PLAINTIFFS			DEFENDANTS					
LORENZO TAYLOR		COLIN L. POWELL, in his official capacity						
(b) COUNTY OF RESIDENCE OF FIRST LISTED PLAINTIFF 88888  (EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES)			COUNTY OF RESIDENCE OF FIRST LISTED DEFENDANT 11001  (IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES ONLY)  NOTE: In land condemnation cases, use the location of the tract of land involved.					
(c) ATTORNEYS (FIRM NAM	E, ADDRESS, AND TELEPHONE NUMBER)		ATTORNEYS (IF KNOWN)					
Jonathan Givner, Esq.	Kathleen A. Beha	in, Esq.					:	
Hayley Gorenberg, Esq. Amy Y. Spencer, Esq. Lambda Legal Defense & Education Fund 120 Wall Street, Suite 1500 555 Twelfth Street, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20004-1206								
II BASIS OF JURISDICT		4	IIP OF PRINCIPAL		(SELECT ONE FOR PLAINTIFF AND ONE FOR D	EFENDANT	)	
(SELECT ONE BOX ONL	Y)	(FOR DIVE	FOR DIVERSITY CASES ONLY!) PTF DFT PTF DFT			DFT		
O 1 U.S. Government	(U.S. Government Not a Party)	Citizen of this Stat	<u>~</u> .	O1	Incorporated or Principal Place of Business in This State	O 4	O 4	
Plaintiff  2 U.S. Government	(U.S. Government Nota Farty)	Citizen of Another	State O 2	O 2	Incorporated and Principal Place of Business in Another State	O 5	O 5	
Defendant	(Indicate Citizenship of Parties in item III)	Citizen or Subject Foreign Country	ofa O 3	O 3	Foreign Nation	O 6	O 6	
IV. CASE ASSIGNMENT AND NATURE OF SUIT (Select one category, A-N, that best represents your cause of action and one in a corresponding Nature of Suit)								
O A. Antitrust	O B. Personal Injury/	O C.	Administrati	ve Agen	cy O D. Temporary Ro Order/Preliminar			
	Malpractice .	<u> </u>	Review Medicare Act		Order/Fremmiai	y Alijui	iction	
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	350 Motor Vehicle 355 Motor Vehicle Product Liabilit	y Other S	Other Statutes			-		
	360 Other Personal Injury 362 Medical Malpractice	<b>□</b> 892	Agricultural Acts Economic Stabilizati					
365 Product Liability			893 Environmental Matters					
			894 Energy Allocation Act 890 Other Statutory Actions (If					
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		625 Drug Related Seizure of 450 Commerce/ICC Rates/etc.						
240 Torts to Land Prisoner Petitions  245 Tort Product Liability 535 Death Penalty		<u> </u>	Property 21 USC 881 460 Deportation 630 Liquor Laws 470 Racketeer Influenced & Corrupt					
290 All Other Real Property 540 Mandamus & Other		1=	640 RR & Truck Organizations					
550 Civil Rights		1=	650 Airline Regs 810 Selective Service 850 Occurational Safety/Health 850 Securities/Commodities/Exchange					
Personal Property 555 Prison Condition 570 Other Fraud		1=	660 Occupational Safety/Health 850 Securities/Commodities/Exchange 690 Other 875 Customer Challenge 12 USC 3410					
371 Truth in Lending					900 Appeal of fee determination access to Justice	under equa	al	
380 Other Personal Property 820 Copyrights Damage 830 Patent			870 Taxes (US plaintiff or 950 Constitutionality of State Statutes					
385 Property Damage Product 840 Trademark			defendant) 871 IRS-Third Party 20	6 USC 7609	890 Other Statutory Actions (i administrative agency revie		cy Act)	
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O G. Habeas (	Corpus/2255	H. Employment     Discrimination	O I. FOIA/PRIVACY ACT	O J. Student Loan		
530 Habeas Corpus		** 442 Civil Rights-Employment (criteria: race, gender/sex, national origin, discrimination, disability, age, religion, retaliation)	895 Freedom of Information Act 890 Other Statutory Actions (if Privacy Act)	152 Recovery of Defaulted Student Loans (excluding veterans)		
		*(If pro se, select this deck)*	*(If pro se, select this deck)*			
O K. Labor/E (non-emp  710 Fair Labor Sta. 720 Labor/Mgmt. 730 Labor/Mgmt. Disclosure Act 740 Labor Railway 790 Other Labor L	ndards Act Relations Reporting & Act itigation	O L. Other Civil Rights (non-employment)  441 Voting (if not Voting Rights Act) 443 Housing/Accommodations 444 Welfare 440 Other Civil Rights	M. Contract    110 Insurance   120 Marine   130 Miller Act   140 Negotiable Instrument   150 Recovery of Overpayment & Enforcement of Judgment   153 Recovery of Overpayment of Veteran's Benefits   160 Stockholder's Suits   190 Other Contracts   195 Contract Product Liability	○ N. Three-Judge Court  441 Civil Rights-Voting (if Voting Rights Act)		
V. ORIGIN  1 Original  Proceeding	Court	3 Remanded from 4 Rein. Appellate Court or Reo	pened another district (specify)	6 Multi district 7 Appeal to Litigation District Judge from Mag. Judge		
			ARE FILING AND WRITE A BRIEF STATE unlawful discrimination on the basis of di	,		
VII. REQUESTED I COMPLAINT		CTION UNDER F.R.C.P. 23  Dec Re	claratory & Injunctive <sub>UR</sub> Lief, Attoræys' Fees	t YES only if demanded in complaint Y DEMAND: X YES NO		
VIII. RELATED CA	SE(S) (See instructi		lf yes, please complete related case f	Form.		
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by law, except as provi	ided by local rules ourpose of initiating th	the information contained herein neither re-	olaces nor supplements the filings and servicial Conference of the United States in Sep- cover sheet is submitted to the Clerk of C	tember 1974, is required for the use of the		
<ol> <li>COUNTY OF RESIDENCE OF FIRST LISTED PLAINTIFF/DEFENDANT (b) County of residence: Use 11001 to indicate plaintiff is resident of Washington, D.C.; 88888 if plaintiff is resident of the United States but not of Washington, D.C., and 99999 if plaintiff is outside the United States.</li> </ol>						
	CITIZENSHIP OF PRINCIPAL PARTIES: This section is completed only if diversity of citizenship was selected as the Basis of Jurisdiction under Section II.					
IV. CASE ASSIGNMENT AND NATURE OF SUIT: The assignment of a judge to your case will depend on the category you select that best represents the <u>primary</u> cause of action found in your complaint. You may select only <u>one</u> category. You <u>must</u> also select <u>one</u> corresponding nature of suit found under the category of case.						
VI. C	CAUSE OF ACTION: Cite the US Civil Statute under which you are filing and write a brief statement of the primary cause.					
VIII. RELATED CASES, IF ANY: If you indicated that there is a related case, you must complete a related case form, which may be obtained from the Clerk's Office.						

Because of the need for accurate and complete information, you should ensure the accuracy of the information provided prior to signing the form.