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then, judges have had a separate, higher pay scale.

Administrative judges' salaries are their lower scale," said William Pope, a judge at the National Transportation Safety Board.

"The logic is, if there's no advantage cases on his agenda now. He said he used to hear even more cases when he had more support staff and did less of his own paperwork.

Source: Office of Personnel Management

Scientist Earns High Honors, Fights for His Job

By Meg Walker
Federal Times Staff Writer

When Arthur Grantz received the Interior Department's highest award for a scientist, the glory temporarily masked his battle with the agency.

Grantz lost his job during a controversial reduction in force last year.

"It was a giggle, really," said Grantz of the Dec. 9 awards ceremony, where Secretary Bruce Babbitt presented Grantz the citation for distinguished service.

Grantz's 46-year career included "pioneering efforts and leadership" in environmental geology and earthquake hazards, the citation said.

But Grantz was one of more than 500 people laid off by the U.S. Geological Survey in September 1995. The RIF eliminated about 25 percent of the agency's staff.

Like Grantz, many had worked for the agency for decades and had prominent scientific backgrounds.

Grantz, who was an assistant geologist in the Menlo Park, Calif., office, is one of about 100 people who are appealing to the Merit Systems Protection Board.

Most of them claim the RIF was done in an improper manner that targeted specific people rather than eliminating jobs based on seniority and skills.

Grantz, 69, also charges the RIF discriminated against older employees.

Unfair Competition

A key reason for the controversy is that the RIF was conducted using one-person competitive levels.

Competitive levels typically group similar jobs together. The first step in a RIF is to eliminate positions from competitive levels. If the level has only one position, then that position must be eliminated.

INTERIOR DEPARTMENT

Arthur Grantz, left, was cited for 'pioneering leadership' in 46 years with the U.S. Geological Survey 15 months after being let go by the agency in a controversial RIF.

In larger competitive levels, employees can compete with each other based on career status, seniority and performance.

"It was improper and corrupt and cynical," Grantz said.

Officials conducting the RIF "didn't look at all the things I did," Grantz said.

"They just looked at the last year and then cynically said I wasn't qualified for any of 152 jobs."

USGS officials have said jobs could not be grouped together because research and science is so specific that most employees would not have the skills to compete for another position.

The layoffs were necessary because the agency had received flat budgets over a period of years, officials said.

Grantz admits retirement isn't all bad. Because of his lengthy government service, he collects a satisfactory annuity, he said. And he has served as a consulting professor at Stanford University.

Voluntary Research

Grantz worked out an agreement with USGS allowing him to conduct research voluntarily in the Menlo Park office. But the agency will not let him complete three projects that came to an abrupt halt.

That is a waste, considering his time and the government money spent to gather data, Grantz said.

For instance, a research project on the geologic framework of the Arctic basin ran into millions of dollars, he said.

A Coast Guard icebreaker lowered equipment through layers of ice so it could record reflections in the water. At least 100 Coast Guard employees aided in the research for three years, Grantz said.

"After all that, they just said they didn't want it," he said.

"I feel an obligation to the taxpayers to bring it to completion."

Ten others who filed appeals have either been reinstated to similar jobs at the Menlo Park office or have settled with the agency.