

From the January 23, 2006 Virginia Lawyers Weekly.

Largest Verdicts of 2005

Former executive succeeds in defamation suit

#4 (tie) \$3.5 million

Hyland v. Raytheon Corporation

Type of case: Defamation, tortuous interference

Court: Fairfax County Circuit Court

Attorneys: Peter Cohen and Elaine Charleson Bredehoft, Reston

Summary: The plaintiff had a successful and lucrative 21-year career with Raytheon Corporation and its predecessor. Shortly before her termination, she was the senior vice-president of a Raytheon subsidiary and was slated as the successor to the president. Raytheon brought in a recruiting company to conduct an evaluation of the president. During the process, the plaintiff was guaranteed confidentiality in her responses. Relying on these promises, she provided honest feedback. Ultimately, her comments were falsely characterized and communicated to Raytheon and the president. The president defamed the plaintiff in her performance evaluation, leading to her termination. She was able to prove that she was terminated for reasons that were demonstrably false.