

Washington v. City of Cincinnati

Chronology of Charge 1 - Workplace Culture / Climate Assessment

Chronology based on the corrected charge letter, WHW report, Long's Council memorandum, and Judge Bowman's decision

Date / Period	What the Record Shows	Why It Matters
November 2021	Former City Manager Paula Boggs Muething directs Washington to initiate a climate assessment of the Fire Department.	This is the origin of Charge 1. Long later alleges that the directive was not completed and that Washington gave no explanation for the lack of follow-through.
2022	Washington states that he prepared a draft RFP for the climate assessment and followed up by email and telephone.	This evidence directly disputes Long's later characterization that the climate assessment 'never moved forward' and that Washington made 'no attempt' to pursue long-term culture change. Judge Bowman found a genuine factual dispute.
November 2022	City HR contacts Women Helping Women (WHW) concerning training for the Fire Department.	This is the first clearly documented later intervention in the materials reviewed. It also raises an important distinction between the 2021 climate-assessment assignment and WHW's later WorkStrong training.
December 15, 2022	WHW meets with City and Fire leadership to discuss the WorkStrong program and a phased training plan.	Washington/Fire leadership are participating in a remedial initiative. The planned Phase 1 launch was initially expected in late March or early April 2023.
Early February 2023	Washington accelerates the WHW training schedule and directs that sessions begin earlier than WHW had planned.	WHW criticizes the acceleration because preparation and customization were incomplete. But the same event also shows affirmative action by Washington, complicating a claim that he made 'no attempt' to address culture.
February-March 2023	WHW conducts Phase 1 leadership training and gathers participant feedback concerning workplace culture, gender-based issues, reporting systems, and leadership.	This supplies Long with recent evidence that serious workplace-culture concerns persisted. However, WHW's assignment was training/evaluation, not necessarily the comprehensive climate assessment ordered in 2021.
March 2023	WHW reports significant cultural and systemic concerns, including criticism of leadership and problems with chain-of-command reporting and complaint handling.	This is Long's strongest recent evidence that the culture problem remained serious. Attribution remains disputed: WHW also identifies institutional and City-level systems issues, not solely Washington's conduct.
March 24, 2023	Long terminates Washington and cites workplace culture as a principal reason. Her corrected charges characterize the problem as worsening since November 2021 largely because of Washington's inaction.	The termination converts the earlier directive and later WHW developments into a continuous-failure theory. The factual premise is disputed, particularly whether Washington failed to act or merely failed to complete the original climate assessment.

Key Evidentiary Gap

The current record does not establish a clear management-response chronology between the November 2021 directive and the late-2022 WHW intervention. Important unanswered questions include whether Washington was given a deadline, warned that his RFP efforts were inadequate, counseled or disciplined for noncompliance, or directed during 2022 to take additional specific action.

Central Issue for Charge 1

The existence of serious workplace-culture problems appears well supported. The unresolved question is whether the City can prove that Washington's own inaction or deficient management was sufficiently responsible for those problems to constitute Charter 'cause' for removal. The draft climate-assessment RFP may be especially important in resolving that question.