

APPELLATE DIVISION OF THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK, THIRD DEPARTMENT

In re the Claim of Dialah

114 A.D.3d 986 (N.Y. App. Div. 2014) · Decided February 6, 2014

SUMMARY

The court affirmed the Unemployment Insurance Appeal Board's determination that the claimant was disqualified from receiving benefits because his employment was terminated for misconduct. The court held that substantial evidence supported the finding that the claimant committed disqualifying insubordination by refusing to make a petty-cash bank deposit, an assigned job duty, without a compelling reason.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Appellate Division of the Supreme Court of the State of New York, Third Department
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Lahtinen, J.P.; McCarthy, J.; Rose, J.; Egan Jr., J.
JURISDICTION	New York
DECIDED	February 6, 2014
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Claimant appealed from a decision of the Unemployment Insurance Appeal Board that disqualified him from receiving unemployment insurance benefits because his employment was terminated for misconduct.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court reviewed whether substantial evidence supported the Unemployment Insurance Appeal Board's determination and deferred to the Board's credibility determinations.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published precedential opinion
PARTIES	Claimant v. Commissioner of Labor

TOPICS

- unemployment benefits
- administrative law
- standard of review
- appellate procedure
- employment law

PRACTICE AREAS

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether claimant's refusal to comply with the employer's directive to make a bank deposit constituted disqualifying misconduct under the unemployment insurance law.
2. Whether substantial evidence supported the Unemployment Insurance Appeal Board's determination that claimant was disqualified from receiving benefits.

HOLDINGS

1. An employee's failure to comply with an employer's reasonable request may constitute insubordination rising to the level of disqualifying misconduct.
2. Substantial evidence supported the Board's determination that claimant was disqualified from receiving unemployment insurance benefits, and the court declined to disturb it.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“an employee’s failure to comply with an employer’s reasonable request may constitute insubordination rising to the level of disqualifying misconduct” (114 A.D.3d at 986)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Claimant worked as a junior accountant for an organization assisting disabled individuals. He was terminated for insubordination after refusing to make a petty-cash deposit at the organization's bank, despite the task being part of his regular job duties. Employer witnesses testified that claimant had previously engaged in similar insubordinate conduct, had received warnings, and had been warned that continued refusal would result in termination.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The Department of Labor initially denied claimant's application for unemployment insurance benefits. An Administrative Law Judge sustained that determination after a hearing, and the Unemployment Insurance Appeal Board affirmed. The Appellate Division affirmed the Board's decision.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- Matter of Ortiz [New York Eye & Ear Infirmary—Commissioner of Labor], 97 A.D.3d 885, 886 (2012)
- Matter of Tosca [Commissioner of Labor], 81 A.D.3d 1061, 1061-1062 (2011)
- Matter of Aguasvivas [Commissioner of Labor], 98 A.D.3d 787, 787-788 (2012)
- Matter of Smith [Rochester Inst. of Tech.—Commissioner of Labor], 68 A.D.3d 1431, 1432 (2009)

- Matter of Simkhayeva [Touro Coll.—Commissioner of Labor], 65 A.D.3d 1415 (2009)

OPINION

PER CURIAM.

Appeal from a decision of the Unemployment Insurance Appeal Board, filed October 9, 2012, which ruled that claimant was disqualified from receiving unemployment insurance benefits because his employment was terminated due to misconduct. Claimant worked as a junior accountant for an organization that assists disabled individuals. He was terminated for insubordination after he -refused to run an errand to make a deposit of petty cash into the organization's bank account.

The Department of Labor issued an initial determination denying his application for unemployment insurance benefits on the ground that he was disqualified from receiving them because his employment was terminated due to misconduct. An Administrative Law Judge sustained this determination following a hearing and the Unemployment Insurance Appeal Board affirmed.

Claimant now appeals. Initially, we note that “[a]n employee’s failure to comply with an employer’s reasonable request may constitute insubordination rising to the level of disqualifying misconduct” (Matter of Ortiz [New York Eye & Ear Infirmary—Commissioner of Labor], 97 AD3d 885, 886 [2012]; see Matter of Tosca [Commissioner of Labor], 81 AD3d 1061, 1061-1062 [2011]).

Here, the employer’s witnesses testified that claimant flatly refused to comply with the employer’s request to make a cash deposit at the bank, which was a part of his regular job duties, and he indicated that he did not wish to perform this task any longer. According to these witnesses, claimant had previously engaged in similar insubordinate conduct for which he had received warnings and was warned at the time of the incident in question that his continued failure to comply with the employer’s request would result in his termination.

Claimant’s assertion that he refused to make the deposit because he was overwhelmed at the time with more important tasks presented a credibility issue for resolution by the Board (see Matter of Aguasvivas [Commissioner of Labor], 98 AD3d 787, 787-788 [2012]). Inasmuch as claimant failed to demonstrate a compelling reason for his failure to follow the employer’s directive, substantial evidence supports the Board’s decision and we decline to disturb it (see Matter of Smith *987[Rochester Inst. of Tech.—Commissioner of Labor], 68 AD3d 1431, 1432 [2009]; Matter of Simkhayeva [Touro Coll.—Commissioner of Labor], 65 AD3d 1415 [2009]).

Lahtinen, J.P., McCarthy, Rose and Egan Jr., JJ., concur. Ordered that the decision is affirmed, without costs.

