

# Bus driver accuses CTA of taking him off the job after discussing safety during George Floyd protests

Erek Slater says CTA managers ordered him and other off-duty employees to stop discussing concerns during the COVID-19 pandemic and demonstrations over the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

By Sam Charles | Updated Jun 8, 2020, 4:07pm CDT



Chicago Police officers have been transported across the city via CTA buses during protests over the death of George Floyd. | Tyler LaRiviere/Sun-Times file

A longtime CTA worker is accusing the transit agency of sidelining him from his job because he tried to organize discussions with other transit employees about their safety and job duties amid protests over the killing of George Floyd and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Erek Slater, a Chicago Transit Authority bus driver for 14 years, filed a motion for injunctive relief in federal court Monday.

Slater contends CTA managers on several occasions ordered him and other off-duty employees to stop discussing concerns they had about their working conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic and the sometimes-violent demonstrations after the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

“Not only are these bus operators being asked to endanger themselves and their families from COVID-19 exposure, they are also being asked to place themselves in the middle of conflict zones with potentially violent protesters, law enforcement and military personnel,” the motion stated.

When Slater reported to work June 5 — after twice attempting to voice concerns with his colleagues — he was told by a supervisor that he was “taken out of service due to promoting a ‘work stoppage,’” the motion stated.

No date has been set for the first hearing.

“CTA does not comment on any pending litigation,” a CTA representative said Monday. “CTA respects and upholds the rights of our employees to exercise their First Amendment rights.”

Slater said he and other CTA employees had reservations about shuttling police officers around the city in CTA buses.

“Many bus operators have legitimate political and moral concerns regarding the heavily armed law enforcement and military response to the recent demonstrations against police brutality in Chicago and about being ordered to participate in these law enforcement actions through transporting law enforcement and military personnel to and from demonstrations,” the motion stated.

“Bus operators sought and obtained civilian employment with the defendant CTA, not conscription into military service to quell domestic demonstrations against police brutality.”

Slater alleged the CTA violated his First and Fourteenth Amendment rights and he’s asking a judge to bar the transit agency from prohibiting safety discussions among off-duty employees within common areas on CTA property.

