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Nassau Sheriff Staffer Sues on Leave Denial To Aid Ailing Wife

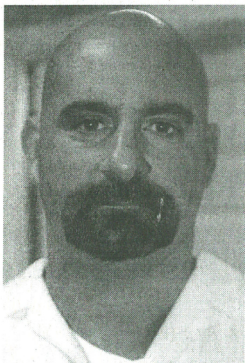
By TOMMY HALLISSEY

An officer in the Nassau County Sheriff's Department has sued the county for \$100 million after he was denied leave to care for his wife who was suffering from Post-Partum Depression.

Jeff Colletti asked for leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act on April 1, 2008 to help care for his wife, Christine, who gave birth to their son three days earlier on March 29, 2008. The leave was denied by Nassau County on the same day the request was filed. His union, the Sheriff Officers Association, unsuccessfully appealed the decision.

Officer Colletti, a 20-year veteran, tore his Achilles tendon while on duty in September 2006 and was placed on "line of duty injury" status. He spent at least nine months out of work before returning on Sept. 30, 2007. He

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The Chief-Leader/Michael O'Kane
**JEFF COLLETTI: Decries
lack of compassion.**

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was restricted to his house from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. during this leave, but the county said this time could not count towards accumulating credit for time off under the Family and Medical Leave Act, because he was not technically working.

A month after Ms. Colletti gave birth to their child, Saverio Paul Colletti, she experienced severe and debilitating Post-Partum Depression, which forced her to be admitted to a local hospital three times for a total of 20 days.

Officer Colletti requested time off under the Family and Medical Leave Act prior to her illness following his son's birth, but Acting Deputy Under-sheriff David Kondrup denied it because he did not have enough time accrued. "Mr. Kondrup was just heartless to me," said Mr. Colletti in a phone interview. "I begged him; I pleaded with him." Mr. Colletti, who was also denied unpaid leave, said he harbors more resentment toward Mr. Kondrup than against Nassau County, where he still works.

The Sheriff's Office did not respond to a request for comment.

"The county knowingly violated my client's civil and constitutional rights when they denied his request to take time off to be by his wife's side and care for his infant child," Mr. Colletti's lawyer, Paul J. Margiotta, said. "Officer Jeff Colletti has served on the force for 20 years and has a spotless record."