

## Fall from high step nets woman \$500,000 award

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A Cook County jury awarded \$500,000 to a 70-year-old woman who broke her right ankle and wrist in a fall at Chicago restaurant Hash House A Go Go.

A verdict was reached June 13 after a three-day trial before Associate Judge Bridget J. Hughes.

Plaintiff Bonita Milem, then 68, was walking down the stairs to the basement dining area for brunch when she fell after descending from a 10.25-inch stair riser. The riser violated the city's building code.

As a result of the fall Milem sustained both injuries, according to her attorney Lisa M. Ciharan of Anesi Ozmon Rodin Novak & Kohen Ltd.

Hash House A Go Go, 1212 N. State Parkway, closed in September for unrelated reasons, Ciharan said.

Milem's premises liability lawsuit contended the step violated Section 13-160-300 of the city's code which stated the maximum height of a riser should not exceed 7.5 inches.

Ciharan argued at trial that the restaurant's management failed to resolve the violation nor did they warn customers of the step.

She said at trial the restaurant owner said there had been no prior incidents, however, two former employees stated that they were aware of the step, had been warned by their supervisors and other customers had previously fallen.

Defense attorneys argued that they did not believe the step was dangerous as the manager had walked up and down the steps "hundreds and hundreds of times" and had no issues, she said.

"This is a phenomenal result for a client who had a



**Lisa M. Ciharan**

very unfortunate incident that all could've been avoided with just a little bit of reasonable care on the defendant's side," Ciharan said in an interview.

The defense was represented by John P. Prusik of Quintairos, Prieto, Wood & Boyer P.A. He could not be reached for comment.

The case is *Bonita J. Milem v. PC State LLC, Individually and d/b/a Hash House A Go Go, et al.*, 17 L 3415.