

# Transit worker fired for burning Quran gets job back

by [Ginger Gibson](#)

April 25, 2011

TRENTON, N.J. (RNS) The New Jersey Transit employee fired for burning pages of the Quran at the site of a proposed Islamic center near Ground Zero will get his job back.

Derek Fenton, who sparked a national firestorm during his protest on the ninth anniversary of the 9/11 terror attacks last September, will be reassigned to his \$86,110-a-year job and get \$25,000 for pain and suffering.

Fenton had joined a protest in Lower Manhattan at the site of a planned Islamic center, where he removed and burned three pages of the Quran. At the time, he was off duty and did not publicly link himself to the transit agency.

The settlement, dated April 21 and obtained by The Star-Ledger, also says he will get back pay equal to \$331.20 for every day since his firing. The state will also pay \$25,000 in legal fees to the American Civil Liberties Union, which brought the suit on behalf of Fenton.

"Our government cannot pick and choose whose free speech rights are protected, based on whether or not they approve of the content of our statements or actions," Fenton, 40, said in a statement. "This is the very essence of the First Amendment."

Spokesmen for the attorney General's office and Gov. Christ Christie, who publicly support Fenton's firing, declined comment. NJ Transit did not respond to a request for comment.

The Washington-based Council on American-Islamic Relations has also said Fenton should keep his job because he was not on duty at the time.

"What he did, however reprehensible, should not impact on his employment," CAIR spokesman Ibrahim Hooper said.