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Court sends Camco worker's case back to commission

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The Supreme Court ruled Tuesday in the case of a man fighting for his job in a dispute with the Camden County Municipal Utilities Authority.

But the high court's decision didn't resolve the uncertainty for Anthony Stallworth, a pump station operator who in November 2005 spent about 75 minutes at a convenience store during a break that was supposed to be 15 minutes long.

The CCMUA's decision to fire Stallworth initially was upheld by an administrative law judge, but the Civil Service Commission then ruled a four-month suspension was in order. An appeals court then weighed in, reinstating Stallworth's dismissal.

The high court on Tuesday said the appellate judges had overstepped their authority in reversing the Civil Service Commission's decision. But the unanimous decision also said the commission "did not adequately consider the public employee's entire record of misconduct" and that the commissioners had failed to explain adequately their reasoning in the Stallworth case.

The case now is to return to the commission "for reconsideration and a more thorough explanation of the . . . ultimate decision."

Stallworth's attorney, Peter Paris, said he was "pleased" to see the appellate ruling overturned. He said the decision "confirmed the Civil Service Commission's role as the primary arbiter of Civil Service employee discipline -- not the courts."

Camden County officials declined to comment.

Paris said he believed the commission will rule again to suspend Stallworth. He noted his client, since being reinstated at the CCMUA, has worked "for over two years without any discipline problems."