

# PACIFIC NORTHWEST

## Whistle-blowers got \$1 million, lost jobs

SEATTLE — Six whistle-blowers were awarded a total of \$1 million and agreed to resign as part of their settlement with King County's public-housing agency in November, according to court papers.

The settlement, reached Nov. 30, originally was kept confidential, but details were released by the King County Housing Authority this week in response to a Freedom of Information Act request filed by The Seattle Times. The six whistle-blowers charged that they were demoted and harassed after reporting shady dealings within the Housing Authority to federal investigators.

According to court papers, Kevin Barber received \$375,000 in the settlement. Five others — Jeanette Hill, Roger Barry, Jerry Hopkins, Bill Noble and Steve Kesling — each received \$125,000. Attorneys on both sides said the confidentiality agreement prevents them from saying why Barber received more than the others.

The workers said supervisors harassed them in 1996 after they went to federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) investigators with reports of mismanagement within the Housing Author-

ity.

The Housing Authority admits no wrongdoing in the settlement. But the settlement came a week after a King County Superior Court jury found in favor of the whistle-blowers, and jurors were about to hear arguments over the size of the damages.