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**Red Wings**

## **Longtime Detroit Red Wings Zamboni driver was reportedly fired for peeing into drain**

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Al Sobotka cheers with fans after the closing ceremony after the final game at Joe Louis Arena on April 9, 2017. (Mike Mulholland | MLive.com) Mike Mulholland | MLive.com

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Longtime Red Wings Zamboni driver Al Sobotka was fired because another employee caught him peeing into a drain at Little Caesars Arena, the [Detroit Free Press reported](#) Wednesday.

A lawsuit has been filed in the Wayne County Circuit Court. Sobotka's lawyers say his rights were violated under Michigan's Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act, arguing that Sobotka was discriminated against due to his age and disability, the Detroit Free Press reported.

According to the lawsuit, Sobotka, 68, had been diagnosed with [benign prostatic hypertrophy](#), a common condition in aging men that can cause uncomfortable urinary symptoms, such as blocking the flow of urine out of the bladder, and/or frequent or uncontrollable urges to urinate.

Sobotka reportedly urinated into a drain used for ice runoff after cleaning the ice at LCA on Feb. 2 instead of using a bathroom 60 to 70 feet away when he felt an uncontrollable urge to go, according to the Detroit Free Press.

He was [officially fired on Feb. 17](#), ending a 51-year run with the franchise.

Sobotka began working for the Red Wings when he was still in high school in 1971. For more than five decades he oversaw day-to-day operations at Joe Louis Arena and then at Little Caesars Arena.

Somewhat of a cult hero in Detroit, he was a fixture at games. He became infamous during the Red Wings playoff runs in the 1990s when he would retrieve dead octopus from the ice and swing them above his head, sending the crowd into a frenzy.

The Red Wings iconic purple octopus, which has a place at LCA to this day, was named "Al" in his honor. He was also heavily involved in the Red Wings' farewell marketing for Joe Louis Arena in 2017.

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