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Bloomberg Is Deposed In Bias Suit Against Firm

By **DAVID W. CHEN**

Mayor Michael E. Bloomberg endured several hours of legal scrutiny on Thursday during a deposition for a federal discrimination lawsuit against the giant financial services and media corporation that he founded.

A spokeswoman for the corporation, Bloomberg L.P., declined to comment on the deposition, which began at 9 a.m. and ended about 1:30 p.m. at Mr. Bloomberg's lawyers' offices in Midtown. Thomas Golden, a lawyer for the company, said in a statement that Mr. Bloomberg's deposition was not complete and would resume at a later date.

One of the plaintiff's lawyers, **Richard A. Roth**, said that Mr. Bloomberg was calm, cooperative and direct in his answers.

"He is a very smart, sophisticated person," **Mr. Roth** said.

Mr. Bloomberg's participation represents the most significant moment yet in a class-action lawsuit filed by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in September 2007 on behalf of more than 80 female employees who argue that

Bloomberg L.P. engaged in a pattern of discrimination against pregnant women who took maternity leave.

Mr. Bloomberg, who is the majority shareholder of the company, is not a defendant. The discrimination is said to have taken place after Mr. Bloomberg left to make a successful mayoral bid in 2001, but the suit asserts that "Michael Bloomberg is responsible for the creation of the systemic, top-down culture of discrimination." And the mayor has conceded that he talked regularly to senior executives at the firm and was kept abreast of what was happening there.

The timing of the deposition is hardly ideal for Mr. Bloomberg, who is trying to win a third term in November. It is rare for a sitting mayor to be deposed in any case, according to legal scholars. But it is especially troubling for Mr. Bloomberg, since the case involves his company, and by extension, his name-brand legacy.

One of the plaintiffs, Janet Loures, said that at one point she, too, had a direct pipeline to Mr. Bloomberg. After starting off at the company in 1989 at a low-level position, she

rose to become interim global data manager in the company's office in Princeton, N.J. As such, she reported directly to Mr. Bloomberg.

But after she became pregnant, she said in the complaint, she began to be treated much worse by other managers and was passed over time and again for promotions. She said that she was even demoted at one point.

Another plaintiff, Maria Mandalakis, an account executive, said in the complaint that she began to get the cold corporate shoulder after she became pregnant in late 2003: worse assignments, poor performance evaluations and other indignities. She said she began to be especially anxious when Bloomberg executives urged her to remember the importance of hitting her sales targets, despite complications in her pregnancy.

But Judith Czelusniak, a spokeswoman for Bloomberg L.P., said in a statement, "We are confident that once all the facts come out they will demonstrate that the claims have no merit."