



# Suit: Bloomberg Condoned Discrimination

October 3, 2007

By Sara Kugler

Associated Press Writer

NEW YORK (AP) - The women at the center of a lawsuit against Bloomberg LP filed a complaint Wednesday alleging that Michael Bloomberg, the city's mayor, has "fostered, condoned and perpetuated" discrimination against female employees at his financial information company.

Tanys Lancaster, 38, Jill Patricot, 35, and Janet Loures, 41, filed a motion to join the case brought last week on their behalf by the federal government against the company, alleging discrimination against women who were pregnant or on maternity leave.

"This systemic, top-down discrimination against female employees is fostered, condoned and perpetuated by the highest levels of management within Bloomberg and by ownership of Bloomberg, to wit, Michael Bloomberg, Peter Grauer, Alexius 'Lex' Fenwick and Thomas Secunda," the complaint read.

Grauer is chairman, Fenwick is CEO and Secunda is another top executive who was a founding partner.

Bloomberg stepped down as CEO in 2001 to run for office but retains 68 percent ownership of the

company. He is not a defendant in the suit, and all the accusations of discrimination specific to Patricot, Loures and Lancaster in the complaint are alleged to have occurred after he left the company.

But the women's complaint alleged he is more active in day-to-day operations than he claims.

"Since becoming mayor, Michael Bloomberg has communicated directly with Lex Fenwick regarding claims of disparate treatment of female executives and about the management of Bloomberg's Human

Resources Department," the complaint said.

It did not outline evidence supporting this claim, and lawyers for the women declined to elaborate.

A spokesman for the mayor had no comment.

The complaint also accused Fenwick of instructing another executive to terminate two female executives who were pregnant, saying, "I'm not having any pregnant bitches working for me."

The company has denied the allegations in the federal suit, and a spokeswoman said the women's complaint amounted to a publicity stunt.

"This company and our 9,800 employees can be proud of our track record in treating people well and in offering the best benefit programs around for families and women," spokeswoman Judith Czelusniak said.

The company provides 12 weeks paid maternity leave and offers the option to take four additional unpaid weeks.

Bloomberg has not spoken publicly about the specific allegations but said this week that the financial information empire "is a

very family friendly company."

"I haven't had anything to do with running it or any discussions about any of their employment policies for a long time," he added.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission brought last week's suit after the three senior employees submitted complaints regarding Bloomberg LP; the agency said it found the company engaged in a pattern of demoting women, diminishing their duties and excluding them from job opportunities after they disclosed they were pregnant.

The EEOC is the federal agency charged with interpreting and enforcing laws passed to prevent discrimination in the workplace. It said the activities at Bloomberg LP occurred with malice or reckless indifference to federal anti-discrimination laws.

In the women's complaint, they describe being demoted, receiving suddenly negative annual reviews, having their compensation slashed and being stripped of responsibilities after they had children.

Patricot, who started with the company in 1998, said she was "immediately

subjected to a hostile work environment" in 2005 after returning from maternity leave, including being excluded from meetings that she had previously attended. A supervisor, Beth Mazzeo, told Patricot that her "career at the company had been 'paused' because she had a child," the complaint said.

It also claimed Mazzeo has said openly that the company "does not make it easy on women, especially mothers," and made such comments during a meeting with summer interns in 2004.

Loures started with the company in 1989 and rose to a senior management position by 2001, but said she was gradually given fewer duties after her pregnancy and maternity leave that year. After she returned to work in early 2002, she was told that just because she went on leave, "she could not expect the business to stand still," the complaint said.

Lancaster, who worked for Bloomberg LP from 1994 to 2005, said she was demoted without explanation after returning from maternity leave.

Their complaint seeks at least \$48 million in damages for each woman. Separately, the EEOC seeks unspecified damages and a change in policies at

Bloomberg LP, and it said it brought the suit only after it tried unsuccessfully to reach a settlement.

While CEO, Bloomberg faced similar accusations. A female sales executive accused him in a 1997 lawsuit of sexual harassment and bias against women, claiming

that he and other male managers displayed a discriminatory attitude toward pregnant women and new mothers.

It said that when he found out the sales executive was pregnant, he told her "Kill it!" and said "Great! Number 16!" \_ an apparent reference to the number of

women in the company who were pregnant or had maternity-related status at the time.

Bloomberg adamantly denied the accusations; the suit was settled in 2000, and the terms were not disclosed.

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