

DAILY NEWS

Ex-Bloomberg LP Employees to Judge: Decide Our Pregnancy Discrimination Case

By Alison Gendar

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Lawyers for Mayor Bloomberg's media company want a judge - not a jury - to decide if it discriminated against pregnant women.

Dozens of women are suing Bloomberg LP, charging their careers were sidetracked after they went on maternity leave - and the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission found a pattern of discrimination.

No trial date has been set but Bloomberg lawyer Eric Dreiband said the news and financial service firm will ask Manhattan Federal Judge Loretta Preska to decide the case herself.

"My belief is that the judge will want a jury to hear that issue," countered lawyer **Richard Roth**, who represents several of

the 79 women in the class-action suit.

The mayor - who resigned as chief executive of the company to run for mayor in 2001, before the alleged discrimination - is not a defendant in the case.

But Bloomberg acknowledged he was briefed by senior executives on company matters after taking office, and he was deposed last summer by the women's lawyers.

Roth said he expects the mayor to be called as a witness when the case goes to trial, now possibly at the end of this year.

The next big step in the case will be for each side sides to try to knock out the other's labor and discrimination experts as unqualified.

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