

Bloomberg co. fights bias case

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 that 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 Dreilbard 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 an

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.

Bloomberg acknowledged he was briefed by senior executives on company matters after taking office. The women's lawyers took testimony from him last summer.

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

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

ified. Bloomberg's lawyer said he will call a former Bloomberg press secretary as a witness.

Alison Gendall