
The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

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EEOC SETTLES FIRST MALE-ON-MALE SEXUAL HARASSMENT CLASS ACTION

*** VOLUNTARY SETTLEMENT TOTALS \$1.9 MILLION ***

MINNEAPOLIS -- The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and Long Prairie Packing Company, Inc. (LPP) announced today that they have reached a voluntary \$1.9 million settlement that resolves all claims in an EEOC lawsuit filed on behalf of a class of current and former LPP male employees who were alleged to have been subjected to a pattern and practice of sexual harassment.

The settlement resolves EEOC's first class action challenging a pattern of harassment by men against men and disability-based harassment, and includes a "zero tolerance" harassment policy. The settlement does not represent any admission of wrongdoing by LPP, nor does it involve any judicial findings of a violation of law.

The terms of the settlement are in a proposed Consent Decree that was submitted to United States District Judge Ann D. Montgomery in federal court in Minnesota on August 11, 1999. The EEOC reached the settlement with LPP, a meat packing plant in Long Prairie, Minnesota, that employs about 235 workers.

The agreement follows a precedent-setting decision issued by the U.S. Supreme Court in March 1998 in the Oncale case. The Supreme Court held that same-sex harassment by men against men may violate Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits sex discrimination in employment.

"This case demonstrates that the EEOC will move quickly and aggressively to respond to problems of workplace harassment, whether brought by men or women," said EEOC Chairwoman Ida L. Castro. "The EEOC expedited investigation of this large-scale harassment claim, completing it in less than four months. With the company's cooperation, we also reached a comprehensive zero-tolerance agreement that's fair and reasonable."

EEOC General Counsel C. Gregory Stewart said: "This settlement represents an unequivocal and welcome effort by Long Prairie Packing to place an unfortunate era behind it. This case is significant because of the extraordinary breadth of relief, reached through negotiation rather than extensive litigation, and demonstrates the commitment of the agency to eliminate sexual and disability-based harassment in the workplace, as provided in the local and national enforcement plans of the agency."

The settlement arises from an EEOC lawsuit filed on August 11, alleging that LPP engaged in a pattern or practice of sexual and disability-based harassment by men against men, as well as retaliation against individuals who opposed the alleged harassment.

"We are fully committed to providing our employees a workplace that is free of discrimination and harassment," said Tom Rosen, CEO, LPP. "We are pleased that we were able to resolve the matter without resorting to litigation."

The EEOC enforces Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin; the Age Discrimination in Employment Act; the Equal Pay Act; prohibitions against discrimination affecting individuals with disabilities in the federal sector; sections of the Civil Rights Act of 1991; and Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act, which prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in the private sector and state and local governments.

Further information about the Commission is available on the agency's web site at www.eeoc.gov.

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