

Pregnancy Bias Suit: 72 Moms vs. Bloomberg

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Complaint: Bloomberg Himself Created 'Culture of Discrimination' at his Company

New York City Mayor and billionaire Michael Bloomberg will have to answer allegations of pregnancy bias at the company he owns while he seeks a third term. 72 current and former female employees who became pregnant while working at Bloomberg LP, the financial news service, claim the company discriminated against them by decreasing their pay, demoting them, and excluding them from other employment opportunities after they became pregnant.

One complaint alleges that a Bloomberg senior executive, upon learning that two of his female executives had become pregnant, remarked "I'm not having any pregnant b-tches working for me" and instructed another executive to terminate them.

Another complaint alleges that female employees at Bloomberg LP were subjected "to stereotypes regarding female caregivers" through comments such as "You are not committed" and "You do not want to be here" when they returned from maternity leave.

The suit began when three current and former female employees brought charges of discrimination to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) claiming the company has a "systemic, top-down culture of discrimination" that was created by Mr. Bloomberg himself.

The EEOC then issued a determination saying their investigation showed that the women's careers "lost momentum" after they became pregnant and that they "were transferred, displaced, and /or demoted."

The EEOC filed suit against the company last year and reached out to around 500 female employees who took maternity leave between February 2002 and the present. 72 have joined the class and that number could rise.

"This case should send a message to other employers and employees that they should not make any stereotypical assumptions that employees who become pregnant or mothers are less committed to their jobs," said Kam Wong, lead counsel on the case for the EEOC. The EEOC's suit is before the Federal District court in Manhattan, where Bloomberg LP is based.

The three women who brought the initial charges to the EEOC have since joined the EEOC's case and their complaint references previous lawsuits that have been filed against Mr. Bloomberg himself by several female executives alleging a hostile work environment for women at his company.

Previous Lawsuits Against Bloomberg

One previous lawsuit alleged that when told by a female employee she was pregnant Mr. Bloomberg responded "kill it". Bloomberg reportedly settled that suit out of court for an undisclosed sum and admitted no wrongdoing.

The three women are seeking over \$48 million in damages and lost wages.

"Our clients claim that they were victims of pregnancy discrimination, disparate treatment, and retaliation after they complained to Human Resources," said one of the attorneys for the women, William Dealy.

Though Mr. Bloomberg stepped down as chairman of Bloomberg LP during his run for mayor in 2001, he still owns 88 percent of the company. A call for comment from Mr. Bloomberg was not returned.

A spokesperson for Bloomberg LP said that the company could not comment on the details of the suit but added "we're confident that once all of the facts emerge, they will demonstrate that the claims are without merit."

Bloomberg LP was founded by Mr. Bloomberg in 1981 and currently has over 10,000 employees in over 126 offices

around the world, according to the company's website.

The discovery process of the suit will proceed through June of next year and is expected to involve 150 to 200 depositions, including that of Mr. Bloomberg. While there is no date set for his deposition, it could occur as the popular mayor faces another legal hurdle, to amend the law to extend term limits to three terms.

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