

PRINCE GEORGE'S THE Journal

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Bias suit seeking \$100M

Workers: Bell Atlantic discriminated

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Eleven employees of a Greenbelt-based affiliate of Bell Atlantic have filed a \$100 million discrimination suit against the parent company, claiming their jobs were eliminated because of their race.

The suit, filed last week in U.S. District Court in Greenbelt, said the plaintiffs "were specifically targeted for purported layoffs which [Bell Atlantic] used to get rid of African Americans, Hispanics and disabled employees."

Ten of the plaintiffs are black, one

is Hispanic. All but two are residents of Prince George's County.

The sales division employees of Chesapeake Directory Sales Co. say in the suit the company denied them promotions without cause and restricted minority employees to lower-paying positions. Their jobs then were eliminated last month when they hired a lawyer to represent them.

The suit also says they were instructed by company representatives to waive their right to sue to receive severance pay and other

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Workers claim bias

SUIT from A1

benefits.

Stephanie Hobbs, a spokeswoman for Bell Atlantic Directory Services in Bethesda, said Bell Atlantic does not have racist employment policies and the plaintiffs' jobs were eliminated as part of a two-year company re-engineering and relocation plan.

"Bell Atlantic has a strong track record in terms of affirmative action and diversity employment and we feel we followed corporate procedure to the letter," she said. "We are confident this will be favorably resolved in court."

Attorneys for the plaintiffs could not be reached for comment.

County residents named in the suit as plaintiffs include: Antonia M. Allen-Sesker of Upper Marlboro; Jacqueline Coleman of Capitol Heights; Charmaine Crawford-Holly of Laurel; Belida S. Dickens-Long of Beltsville; Tyo Hodgins of Camp Springs; Varnetta Moses of Capitol Heights; Gloria Real of Upper Marlboro; Geraldine Stancil of Capitol Heights; and Carol D. Willis of Seabrook.