

# THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

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## Hechinger Faces Suit From 14 Ex-Workers Alleging Racial Bias

A WALL STREET JOURNAL *News Roundup*

Fourteen former employees of Hechinger Co. filed a racial-bias suit against the regional home-improvement retailer, seeking unspecified compensatory damages and punitive damages of \$150 million.

The plaintiffs, all of whom are black, seek class-action certification for the suit, filed Oct. 26 in U.S. District Court in Baltimore. The charges come as Hechinger battles another discrimination suit, a class-action suit filed in March in the Baltimore court alleging age bias and seeking damages of \$100 million.

At issue in both suits are terminations that occurred since about 1991 during a restructuring to cut costs, according to the complaints. The plaintiffs said in the suits that Hechinger's work force grew during the restructuring.

"They were recruiting new employees at the same time" as the terminations, George Hermina, an attorney for the plaintiffs in both suits, said.

Named in the suits are the company; its president and chief executive, John Hechinger Jr.; and a senior vice president, Gary Mercer. Through an attorney, Mr. Hechinger denied the allegations. Mr. Mercer couldn't be reached for comment.

"This company is a long-established quality business in the region, and its accomplishments speak for themselves," attorney Jay Berke said.

Hechinger, based in Landover, Md., is about 45% controlled by the prominent Hechinger family. The company operates about 133 Hechinger hardware and Home Quarters stores in 24 eastern and midwestern states.