

Nation's Largest Jewelry Chain Charged With Sex Discrimination Practices

Washington, D.C. (March 19, 2008) -- Sterling Jewelers, the nation's largest chain of jewelry stores, was charged with committing widespread sex discrimination against its female retail sales employees in a class action lawsuit filed in federal court in the Southern District of New York on March 18, 2008.

Sterling Jewelers operates more than 1300 stores located in shopping malls and centers in every state in the nation. The stores operate under at least 12 retail brand names, including Jared The Galleria of Jewelry, Kay Jewelers, Belden Jewelers, JB Robinson Jewelers, Marks & Morgan Jewelers, Weisfield Jewelers, Osterman Jewelers, Shaw's Jewelers, Rogers Jewelers, LeRoy's Jewelers, Goodman Jewelers and Friedlanders Jewelers.

The suit was filed by 15 current and former female employees who have worked at stores located in New York, Florida, California, Texas, Indiana, Missouri, Massachusetts, Nevada and New Jersey. The suit claims Sterling Jewelers has engaged in a pattern or practice of sex discrimination by denying female retail sales employees equal opportunities to be promoted into and within management jobs, and by paying them less than men performing the same work, at the same levels, in the same stores and at the same time period. The suit seeks fundamental changes to Sterling's personnel policies, as well as awards of earnings and benefits lost because of discrimination and compensatory and punitive damages.

"While Sterling Jewelers sold more than \$ 1 billion in jewelry last year, it failed to pay the women behind the counter the same wages it paid men and failed to offer them the same chances for promotion." said Joseph M. Sellers, a partner in Cohen Milstein Hausfeld & Toll, PLLC and co-lead counsel for the plaintiffs.

Sam J. Smith, Burr & Smith, co-lead counsel said, "It is outrageous that female employees with similar experience were hired for several dollars per hour less than male employees working in the same job in the same store."

"Sterling treated female employees as second class citizens in their promotion practices as well and gave preferences to men who were significantly less qualified," added Tallahassee attorney and co-lead counsel Thomas A. Warren.

After examining sworn charges of discrimination filed by the plaintiffs and reviewing statistical analyses of Sterling's workforce data, the U.S. Equal

Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) found reasonable cause on January 3, 2008, to believe Sterling subjected its female retail sales employees throughout the company “to a pattern or practice of sex discrimination in regard to promotion and compensation.”

The plaintiffs’ attorneys have established a toll-free number for individuals who have information regarding the allegations or who want information about the lawsuit; that number is 866 854-5152.

Sterling Jewelers is a wholly owned the UK-based company Signet. It is traded on the NYSE as SIG.

A copy of the Sterling complaint is available on www.cmht.com. For additional information, or to speak with attorneys on the case, please contact Deborah Schwartz at 301-897-8838 or deborah@mediarelationsinc.com.