



## Servers At NYC Rodeo Bar Sue Over Sexualized Workplace

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Law360, New York (July 07, 2014, 3:18 PM ET) -- A would-be class of Johnny Utah's servers and bartenders claim in a new suit that the owners of the midtown Manhattan western-themed bar, in their desire to effect a "wild west party" atmosphere, fostered an oppressive work environment that exploits and degrades female employees.

Plaintiffs, including former server Stephanie Sanz, are claiming for unpaid overtime, wages and other alleged compensation violations as well as for compensatory and punitive damages for discrimination in the New York City federal lawsuit lodged in June and amended Thursday.

The bar's owners, defendants Robert Werhane and John Sullivan, enjoy at least \$500,000 in annual sales at the 6,000 square-foot Rockefeller Center location, according to the class action suit. The bar's corporate name is Johnny Utah 51 LLC.

While male workers can wear shirts and jeans, and are not asked to engage in humiliating behavior, female workers are expected to encourage male customers to buy them shots of alcohol during their shifts, to sit on male customers' laps, ride a mechanical bull with other female employees and male customers, and dance on the bar, the suit says.

"The female servers are subjected to pervasive and regular unwelcome sexual comments, propositions, and physical contact by male customers," the complaint claims. "Female servers know that if they complain to management about the unwelcome sexual conduct that they will be penalized and told that they are 'not fun' and do not know how to 'throw a party.' Defendants tell female servers to be 'team players' and not complain about the sexual conduct because it is 'part of their job.'"

The latest version of the lawsuit also says cameras placed throughout Johnny Utah's record the events at the restaurant, including the female employees removing their shirts, kissing one another and dancing on the bar.

The defendants place video clips and pictures from the recordings to the public Johnny Utah's [Facebook](#) page and [Twitter](#) account, the suit says.

"At all relevant times, female employees were not asked whether defendants had permission to post their images in order to promote Johnny Utah's," according to the complaint.

Patrons also are encouraged to record and post their own videos, according to the lawsuit.

The proposed plaintiff class is growing, according to the docket, which shows that more than 20 individuals have consented to become plaintiffs in recent weeks.

The plaintiffs are represented by Jeanne-Marie Bates Christensen and Brittany Sloane Weiner of Imbresi Christensen and Michael PC.

Counsel information for the defendants was not available Monday.

The complaint is Sanz et al. v. Johnny Utah 51 LLC et al., case number [1:14-cv-04380](#), in the U.S. District Court of the Southern District of New York.

—Editing by Rebecca Flanagan.