

REUTERS Deutsche Bank VP sues, alleges bias over pregnancy

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- Plaintiff says was "mommy-tracked" by bank
- Deutsche Bank says takes allegations seriously

By Jonathan Stempel

NEW YORK, Sept 12 (Reuters) - A Deutsche Bank AG ([DBKGn.DE](#)) vice president filed a gender bias lawsuit accusing the German bank of denying her pay and promotions, and trying to demote her because she took maternity leave.

Kelley Voelker, who works in New York in a hedge fund group, said she has never been promoted in her 13 years at Deutsche Bank despite being qualified to become a director.

Voelker, who is in her mid-40s, sued the bank in papers filed Monday in U.S. District Court in Manhattan.

"We take these allegations very seriously and are currently reviewing the complaint," a Deutsche Bank spokeswoman said.

In her complaint, Voelker said she rejected her boss' urging that she take a "reduced role" after her return from maternity leave in May 2010.

Upon her return, she said, Deutsche Bank directed bigger accounts to a male colleague, slashed her bonus, and tried to demote her to a "vague" marketing job. The bank retracted the demotion after her lawyers complained, she said.

"Plaintiff was retaliated against and ultimately 'mommy-tracked' for her decision to take maternity leave," the lawsuit said.

The lawsuit seeks compensatory and punitive damages, among other remedies. Voelker said she also filed a discrimination case with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Like many other lawsuits alleging gender bias on Wall Street, the complaint also provides illustrations of alleged "hostile and degrading" conduct by bank employees to women.

In one instance, at a 2009 meeting where Voelker questioned a decision by a supervisor, her boss said: "I'd watch your step -- she's pregnant," the complaint said.

The law firm Thompson Wigdor represents Voelker. That firm also represents Nafissatou Diallo, a hotel maid who accused former International Monetary Fund chief Dominique Strauss-Kahn in a civil lawsuit of attempting to rape her. Criminal sexual assault charges against Strauss-Kahn were dropped last month.

Goldman Sachs Group Inc ([GS.N](#)) last November won the dismissal of a lawsuit, also filed by Thompson Wigdor, by a former vice president who said the bank unlawfully fired her while she was on maternity leave.

Last month, U.S. District Judge Loretta Preska in Manhattan dismissed an EEOC lawsuit accusing financial news company Bloomberg LP of a pattern of discrimination against pregnant women and mothers returning from maternity leave, even if there were cases of individual bias. Bloomberg said that lawsuit lacked merit.

The case is Voelker v. Deutsche Bank AG, U.S. District Court, Southern District of New York, No. 11-06362. (Reporting by Jonathan Stempel, editing by Matthew Lewis)