

## FAMILY DOLLAR WILL PAY \$45,000 TO SETTLE SEXUAL HARASSMENT SUIT



Discount retailer Family Dollar Stores of Virginia, Inc. will be paying 45,000 dollars to settle a sexual harassment lawsuit. The suit was filed by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) for a female employee. According to a complaint filed by the EEOC, a woman was sexually harassed by her male store manager at a Family Dollar store where she was employed in Richmond, VA. The female worker was a customer service representative at Family Dollar from August 19th to September 5, 2009. The manager, who was the employee's direct supervisor, allegedly harassed the woman by groping her and propositioning her sex. The complaint states that the woman's objections were neglected, and the questionable conduct continued. The complaint further alleges that the manager reduced the employee's hours for one particular week and informed her that she would have to allow him at her home in order to have her work hours reinstated. She refused this offer and resigned the subsequent day. After initially trying to reach a pre-litigation agreement, the EEOC filed the complaint on September 29th in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Richmond Division. The EEOC sought back pay, compensatory, damages and punitive damages, rightful-place hiring and injunctive relief. The complaint alleges that the man's behavior was a violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits sexual harassment, among other things, such as discrimination based on



people's race, age or religious beliefs. "Employees should not have to tolerate unwanted sexual conduct as a condition of employment," said Lynette A. Barnes, regional attorney of the EEOC's Charlotte District Office, in an EEOC press release. "Employees should not feel compelled to quit their jobs to avoid being harassed. The EEOC will vigorously prosecute employers who allow employees to be sexually harassed." The Charlotte District Office includes the EEOC's Richmond Local Office, where the complaint was filed. As part of a consent decree, Family Dollar has agreed to supply copies of the company's antidiscrimination policies and complaint procedures to each employee working in stores within the company's District 184. Family Dollar, which operates approximately 7,000 retail stores throughout 44 states, will also be required to train managers and employees on the same policies and procedures. Additionally, the stores within District 184 will have posted copies of the harassment policy, while the precise store where the female employee worked will have a notice about the lawsuit posted. "Employers are reminded that it is not enough to have policies prohibiting sexual harassment in place, hidden away in a handbook somewhere," said Barnes. "Employers must ensure that employees are adequately informed of these policies and of procedures for making complaints about sexual harassment." The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission is an organization that was implemented to enforce federal laws prohibiting employment discrimination.