

Anheuser-Busch Gender Discrimination Trial Begins

ST. LOUIS (AP) — Jury selection began Monday in the trial of a case brought by the former top ranking woman executive at [Anheuser-Busch](#) [1], who accuses the beer maker of wage discrimination for paying her less than half the base salary of her male predecessor.

Francine Katz sued the company in 2009, a year after resigning as vice president of communications and consumer affairs for the maker of Budweiser, Bud Light and other beers. She worked at Anheuser-Busch for two decades and was the first woman to join its strategy committee in 2002, making her the brewer's highest-ranking female executive.

[The St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#) [2] reported Monday that Katz says she was paid less than her male colleagues at a workplace with a "frat party" environment. Katz resigned after Belgian-based InBev bought the company in 2008 — a purchase that allowed her to learn through regulatory filings that her salary was less than half that of her predecessor in the vice president's job.

The "disparate compensation is a manifestation of a corporate culture at Anheuser-Busch that adversely impacts women and creates barriers to their advancement based on their gender," the lawsuit alleges.

The trial began Monday morning with jury selection. Katz's lawyer said she expects the proceedings to take three weeks. Potential witnesses include former company CEO August Busch III. The brewer has denied the allegations.

Both sides have enlisted prominent local lawyers. Katz's attorney, Mary Anne Sedey, recently represented two female firefighters in a gender discrimination case against the Monarch Fire Department that resulted in a \$400,000 verdict.

The brewer's lead attorney is Jim Bennett of the firm Dowd Bennett LLP, who has represented many of St. Louis' largest companies in multi-million dollar trials, including Monsanto and Emerson.

Katz's complaint says that after she was promoted in 2002, her base salary was raised to \$300,000 from \$275,000, with a \$200,000 performance bonus and 75,000 stock options. Her predecessor, John Jacob, had a base salary of \$605,000 in his last full year of employment, along with a \$645,000 bonus and 270,900 stock options, according to the suit.

Katz said August Busch III called her "ungrateful" after she brought her complaint about the salary disparity to him and other top company executives.

Anheuser-Busch Gender Discrimination Trial Begins

Published on Food Manufacturing (<http://www.foodmanufacturing.com>)

In a written statement, the company called Katz's claims "false and unjustified."

"The facts and evidence presented at trial will prove that she was treated and compensated fairly," the statement reads. "Ms. Katz was always paid generously during her 20 years of employment at Anheuser-Busch. Her compensation was determined through a fair, rigorous and gender-blind process, which involved outside independent compensation experts."

Information from: St. Louis Post-Dispatch, <http://www.stltoday.com> [3]

Source URL (retrieved on 04/27/2015 - 5:56am):

<http://www.foodmanufacturing.com/news/2014/04/anheuser-busch-gender-discrimination-trial-begins>

Links:

[1] <https://twitter.com/AnheuserBusch>

[2] <http://www.foodmanufacturing.com/bit.ly/PLroAh>

[3] <http://www.stltoday.com>