

Houston Federal Jury Clears National Oilwell Varco in Employment Lawsuit

A Houston federal jury this week returned a verdict in favor of National Oilwell Varco, L.P., (NYSE: NOV), finding no wrongdoing in an employment discrimination lawsuit filed by eight African-Americans who sought \$120 million in damages.

Houston-based NOV, an oilfield equipment supplier, argued that these employees were not treated differently because of their race. The jury heard 12 days of testimony in the trial before Judge Lee H. Rosenthal in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas.

The plaintiffs were represented by high-profile civil rights lawyer Angela M. Alioto of San Francisco's Law Offices of Mayor Joseph L. Alioto and Angela Alioto in their claims of racial discrimination, hostile work environment and retaliation. Their lawsuit alleged that non-African-Americans received raises and promotions that were denied to the plaintiffs, in addition to claiming that racial slurs were frequently used in the workplace. However, the jury found that NOV had not violated the rights of the plaintiffs, seven former NOV employees and one current NOV employee.

NOV's trial team was led by special trial counsel John Zavitsanos of Houston's Ahmad, Zavitsanos, Anaipakos, Alavi & Mensing P.C., or AZA. He offered evidence that showed there were several non-discriminatory reasons some of the workers did not receive promotions, were not asked to return to their jobs after taking unauthorized leave or were fired for cause.

"NOV always has promoted a diverse workplace where discrimination isn't tolerated," says Zavitsanos. "This was nothing more than an attempt by a discrimination law firm to

pull out a playbook that has worked in other cases in hopes of cashing in.”

Also representing NOV along with Zavitsanos were attorneys Monique Gougisha Doucette and Christopher E. Moore of Ogletree, Deakins, Nash, Smoak & Stewart’s New Orleans office. Assisting on the case was law school graduate Nathan Campbell, who is not yet licensed to practice law.

The plaintiffs in *Vital, et al. v. National Oilwell Varco*, No. 4:12-cv-01357, included former NOV employees Junious Vital, DeWarren Bellard, Damon Darby, Herbert Heard, Edward Jiles, Jerome Johnson, David Lane and current employee Billy Rose.