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Accountant Guilty of Sex Bias

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Accountant Guilty of Sex Bias

WASHINGTON, Sept. 20 (AP) — The Price Waterhouse accounting firm illegally discriminated against a woman when it refused to promote her to partner in 1983, a Federal District Judge Gerhard A. Gesell ruled today.

Judge Gesell, however, denied a request by the woman, Ann B. Hopkins, for \$1.2 million in damages and promotion to partner.

Judge Gesell said he had denied the damages because he did not know whether Mrs. Hopkins would have been made a partner had the decision not been tainted by sex discrimination and because she had not demonstrated a history of bias, humiliation and other factors that would have compelled her to resign. He did, however, award her attorneys' fees.

Mrs. Hopkins, a senior manager in the Washington office of Price Waterhouse, received favorable reports in her five years with the accounting

firm. But when she was nominated to be a partner, the firm's policy board denied the promotion because it said her personality was "overbearing." She was said to be too pushy for a woman.

In his 28-page decision, Judge Gesell said partnerships were free to evaluate employees but not to inject stereotyped assumptions about women into the selection process.

He said Price Waterhouse should have taken "the steps necessary to alert partners to the possibility that their judgments may be biased, to discourage stereotyping and to investigate and discard, where appropriate, comments that suggest a double standard."

Joseph E. Connor, chairman and senior partner of Price Waterhouse, said the firm was pleased that Judge Gesell had found no intent by the company or its partners to discriminate.