

DFEH News Brief

Date: November 30, 2010
For Immediate Release

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**STATE REACHES MULTIMILLION DOLLAR SETTLEMENT WITH
TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMPANY-
VERIZON TO PAY UP TO \$6,011,190 TO SETTLE FAMILY CARE AND MEDICAL
LEAVE CLASS COMPLAINT INVESTIGATED BY THE DFEH**

ELK GROVE, CA - The Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH) today announced that Verizon has agreed to pay up to \$6,011,190 to current and former California employees to settle a class action lawsuit the DFEH filed challenging the company's family medical leave practices. The settlement, which is subject to court approval, covers Verizon's voice, data and video operations in California, which employ more than 7,000 people.

The class action lawsuit began with a more than two-year-long investigation into Verizon's practices under the California Family Rights Act (CFRA), which was conducted by the DFEH's Special Investigations Unit. The lawsuit alleges that from 2007 to 2010, Verizon denied or failed to timely approve class members' requests for leave for their own serious health condition, to care for a family member with a serious health condition, or to bond with a new child. The Department further alleged that the company fired some class members for violating Verizon's attendance policy when they missed work for a CFRA-qualifying reason. Settlement of the lawsuit--the largest in DFEH history--could result in payment to class members of more than \$6 million dollars, an amount equivalent to an entire year of DFEH Enforcement Division settlements.

"This year, Governor Schwarzenegger directed all his departments to take steps to ensure that they vigilantly honor the state's commitment to equal employment for people with disabilities and I am pleased our department is vigilantly ensuring that private businesses do the same," said DFEH Director Phyllis Cheng.

Verizon cooperated fully with the DFEH's investigation and did not admit to any wrongdoing in settling the lawsuit. As part of the settlement, Verizon agreed to review and revise its leave policies and procedures and to continue an existing internal review process that employees can invoke to appeal denials. Verizon also agreed to train all California officers, managers, supervisors and human resources personnel on the procedures and to submit regular updates to the DFEH regarding the company's compliance.

"Complying with workplace laws is good for business and productivity. The DFEH is pleased to have negotiated a workable solution that both enforces the employees' leave

rights and assists Verizon to avoid future litigation," said Cheng. "The DFEH will continue to pursue high-impact group and class actions to more effectively enforce California's civil rights laws and to eliminate systemic discrimination."

The mission of the DFEH is to protect the people of California from unlawful discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations and from hate violence. Included in the Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA) (Gov. Code, § 12900 et seq.), which the DFEH enforces, is the California Family Rights Act (CFRA) (Gov. Code, § 12945.2). For more information about the DFEH and the laws it enforces, visit the Department's website at www.dfeh.ca.gov.

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