NEW YORK – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced a $571 million multi-state settlement with three major technology corporations charged with illegally conspiring to boost prices for liquid crystal display (LCD) screens used in televisions, computer monitors, and laptops. As part of the agreement reached with AU Optronics Corporation, LG Display Co., Ltd., Toshiba Corporation, and affiliated entities of each corporation, New York State taxpayers are expected to receive upwards of $10 million through recovery for government purchases and penalties, in addition to restitution to compensate consumers affected by the scheme.

The corporate defendants in the latest round of settlements agreed to pay $543.5 million to settle antitrust claims brought on behalf of consumers, government entities, and other public entities by a multistate group of eight Attorneys General and private class action attorneys. Separately, two of the defendants agreed to pay $27.5 million in fines and penalties to the States. The defendants also agreed to engage in antitrust compliance programs.

Together with seven earlier settlements with other defendants reached by Attorney General Schneiderman in December 2011, total settlement payments will top $1.1 billion.

“This price-fixing scheme created an unlevel playing field for businesses that abide by the rules, and left consumers paying artificially higher costs for televisions, computers and other electronics,” said Attorney General Schneiderman. “Protecting the integrity of the marketplace is the only way to ensure the best outcome for New York’s consumers. That is why my office will aggressively police anti-competitive practices and hold accountable corporations that violate the law.”

New York’s complaint alleged that from 1999 to 2006 Japanese, Korean, and Taiwanese manufacturers of thin film transistor (TFT) LCD panels, together with their U.S. affiliates, engineered a conspiracy to fix prices of TFT-LCD panels, and sold into New York millions of TFT-LCD panels at prices fixed by the cartel. TFT-LCD screens are essential components of televisions, computer monitors, and laptop screens. Substantially all TFT-LCD products sold in New York during the conspiracy period were sold at high prices illegally fixed by the conspiracy.

Following court approval of the settlements, at least $692 million will be available for partial refunds to compensate consumers residing in New York and 23 other States and the District of Columbia who purchased products containing TFT-LCD panels during the period beginning January 1, 1999 and continuing through December 31, 2006. Information on how consumers can claim partial refunds, once the Court has approved the settlements, as well as other information about the settlements and the court approval process, is available at www.lcddclass.com.
In addition to the consumer recoveries, defendants in the case will pay $8 million in penalties to New York State’s treasury. New York State and other New York public entities that purchased the price-fixed products will receive at least $8 million in partial refunds. Other States and public entities will receive an additional $34 million in penalties, and an additional $24 million in partial refunds.

These settlements conclude Attorney General Schneiderman’s lawsuit against alleged LCD cartel participants. Attorney General Schneiderman expressed his gratitude to the New York State Office of General Services, New York’s public procurement agency, for its important assistance in the case.

The case was handled for New York by Assistant Attorneys General Richard L. Schwartz and Amy McFarlane of the Antitrust Bureau, with oversight by Bureau Chief Scott Hemphill and Executive Deputy Attorney General Karla G. Sanchez.

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