ATTORNEY GENERAL REACHES SETTLEMENTS WITH LCD MANUFACTURERS IN PRICE-FIXING CASE

LITTLE ROCK - Attorney General Dustin McDaniel announced today that the State has reached agreement with some of the world's largest manufacturers of flat-panel liquid crystal display screens, settling a federal lawsuit that alleged the companies' executives conspired to fix the prices of LCD screens in consumers' televisions, computer monitors and other electronic devices.

Settlements were reached with the majority of defendants sued by McDaniel in August 2010. The settlements include the resolution of claims by McDaniel, seven other attorneys general, and a national class action. The settlements collectively provide more than $500 million for a settlement fund for consumers and businesses in 25 states, including Arkansas.

"When companies collude to raise prices in violation of antitrust laws, Arkansas consumers suffer," McDaniel said. "Throughout this protracted litigation, my office worked to ensure that consumers do not pay the price for the illegal activities of these companies. We believe this settlement will benefit Arkansas consumers, businesses and government entities that were victims of this price-fixing scheme."

The settling companies have also resolved claims brought by McDaniel for civil penalties under the Arkansas Unfair Practice Act.

The lawsuit filed last year was the result of a year-long multistate investigation. The complaint accused top executives of several companies of holding numerous secret meetings from at least 1999 to at least 2006 for the purpose of exchanging information and setting prices on LCD panels. Companies such as Dell, Apple and Hewlett Packard were among those targeted by the manufacturers' price fixing.

Settling Defendants include: Chimei Innolux Corp.; Chi Mei Optoelectronics USA, Inc.; Chi Mei Optoelectronics Japan Co., Ltd.; HannStar Display Corporation; Hitachi, Ltd.; Hitachi Displays, Ltd.; Hitachi Electronic Devices, USA, Inc.; Samsung Electronics, Co., Ltd.; Samsung Electronics America, Inc.; Samsung Semiconductor, Inc.; Sharp Corporation; and Sharp Electronics Corporation. The settling defendants deny any wrongdoing.

McDaniel is joined by the Attorneys General of California, Florida, Missouri, Michigan, New York, West Virginia, and Wisconsin, as well as a class action brought on behalf of private claimants.

The Attorney General's litigation continues against LG Display Co., Ltd., LG Display America, Inc., AU Optronics Corporation, and AU Optronics Corporation America.

The LG Display defendants pleaded guilty to federal charges for price fixing TFT-LCD panels in 2008 and paid $400 million in federal fines. The AU Optronics defendants, along with several employees, have been indicted on charges of price fixing and are scheduled to go to trial in January on those criminal charges.

Because litigation continues against the remaining defendants, the settlement fund will not be distributed until the litigation is concluded so as to enable any additional recoveries to be included. McDaniel's suit against the remaining defendants is scheduled for trial in November 2012.

The settlement, which is subject to court approval, will provide restitution to Arkansas residents and businesses, as well as governmental entities. Following completion of the litigation, a claims process will be announced.

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