

State Trooper Files a Second Bias Lawsuit

By The Associated Press

April 11, 1999

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A state trooper who won a racial discrimination lawsuit against the New Jersey State Police is going to court again, charging that superior officers have retaliated against him because of his legal victory.

Sgt. Vincent Bellaran, who is of Filipino and Hispanic descent, filed the new lawsuit in Federal District Court on Friday. He seeks punitive damages against the state police, Acting Superintendent Michael A. Fedorko, State Attorney General Peter G. Verniero and several officers.

In 1991, Sergeant Bellaran contended in his first lawsuit that his superiors berated him with racial and ethnic slurs, that his formal complaints were ignored, and that he was passed over for promotion.

A Federal District Court judge ruled in March 1998 that the state should award damages to Sergeant Bellaran. The judge held a separate trial to determine damages, but has not yet issued a ruling.

In the new suit, Sergeant Bellaran said that in 1998, his superiors began a new round of discrimination that escalated after the judge's ruling was publicized. The sergeant was berated and embarrassed and assigned to work for a junior trooper, and minority troopers were harassed and punished because of their friendship with him, the lawsuit says.