Activision Blizzard's harassment settlement is one step closer to approval

A federal judge is allowing plans for a settlement between Activision Blizzard and the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to move forward, denying California state regulators' request for a delay. The decision was filed yesterday in California district court, and it's the latest setback for the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing's (DFEH) attempts to intervene in the deal.

The EEOC and Activision Blizzard agreed last year to settle sexual harassment and discrimination claims against the games publisher — which employees have accused of facilitating sexist abuse at the highest levels. The DFEH alleges that the federal settlement would harm its own case by potentially letting Activision Blizzard destroy relevant evidence. In December, however, a judge denied its request to formally join the suit to oppose the agreement.

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The DFEH appealed last month, but while the appeal will proceed, the EEOC's case won't be stayed during that period. "DFEH has never clearly enunciated what advantage it seeks to gain by its participation as a formal party," wrote Judge Dale Fischer, noting that the agency can make its case against the proposed consent decree between the EEOC and Activision Blizzard as an outside party. "Similarly, there is no reason to think that a stay would simplify anything about this lawsuit." A hearing will be set to weigh formally approving the federal settlement.

The complaints against Activision Blizzard predate Microsoft announcing plans to acquire it; according to a recent SEC filing, the companies entered discussions a couple of months after the EEOC agreement was proposed. The proposed settlement requires Activision Blizzard to set up an $18 million fund for employees who suffered harm alongside other measures, a change that would come alongside the departure of some high-level figures at the company — but not, so far, CEO Bobby Kotick.

https://www.theverge.com/2022/2/24/22949065/activision-blizzard-eeoc-settlement-california-judge-dfeh-stay-denied