

133 more ex-employees sue PSC unit over severance pay

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Another 133 former employees of Public Service Co. have sued the utility, claiming the company deceived them about severance pay. They seek payments that would average \$19,000 apiece.

The suit, filed Thursday in U.S. District Court, follows a successful trial for 90 former employees of PSC's Information Technology & Systems Department, which PSC sold to IBM in 1995.

A federal judge ruled for those employees, calling the case a "shocking example of corporate deception." He ordered severance paid. PSC has appealed the case.

Attorney Todd McNamara, who filed both suits, said the second includes employees who didn't know about the earlier suit, or were left out for various reasons.

Public Service Co., now part of New Century Energies, declined comment until it saw the new suit. According to McNamara, PSC

"conspired to conceal from its employees a substantial change in their entitlement and severance benefits" before the sale to IBM. "They assumed under the old plan they would get severance. But they changed the rules."

Under federal law the plaintiffs can sue for severance, interest and legal fees, all of which were awarded in June to the 90 employees.