

EEOC and Cracker Barrel Sign National Mediation Agreement



Article By

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WASHINGTON – Cracker Barrel Old Country Store, Inc. and the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) today announced the signing of a National Universal Agreement to Mediate (NUAM) to streamline the handling of employment discrimination claims.

With the signing of this agreement, Cracker Barrel joins more than 200 national and regional private sector employers, including several Fortune 500 companies, who have made similar arrangements with the EEOC. This agreement provides the framework for both organizations to informally resolve any workplace issues that may arise from time to time through Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) rather than through a traditional lengthy, formal EEOC investigation or potential litigation. The NUAM includes all Cracker Barrel locations.

“Nationwide mediation agreements like this are a classic win-win,” said Nicholas

Inzeo, Director of the EEOC's Office of Field Programs. "NUAMs are a non-adversarial and efficient way for companies to handle discrimination charges using the EEOC as a partner and advisor. EEOC mediation encourages a positive work environment, and the company saves time and money. Everyone benefits. We are gratified that a major employer such as Cracker Barrel has joined the growing ranks of companies that are making use of this innovative system."

Cracker Barrel Vice President and General Counsel Michael J. Zylstra said, "Cracker Barrel is committed to providing a fully inclusive workplace, where diversity is welcomed and everyone is treated with courtesy and respect. This innovative agreement builds upon our existing policies and procedures to effectively and fairly resolve employee concerns and demonstrates our shared goal to create a bias-free workplace. We look forward to developing an even stronger relationship with the EEOC."

Under the terms of the NUAM, any eligible charges of discrimination filed with the EEOC in which Cracker Barrel is named as an employer/respondent will be referred to the EEOC's mediation unit. The company will designate a corporate representative to handle all inquiries and other logistical matters related to potential charges in order to facilitate a prompt scheduling of the matter for EEOC mediation.

Expanding mediation is a key component of the EEOC's efforts to improve operational efficiency and effectiveness. The EEOC has entered into 233 national and regional Universal Agreements to Mediate (UAMs) with private sector employers, including several Fortune 500 companies. Additionally, EEOC district offices have entered into 1,743 mediation agreements with employers at the local levels within their respective jurisdictions. Since the full implementation of the EEOC's National Mediation Program in April 1999, more than 136,000 charges of employment discrimination have been mediated, with nearly 70 percent being successfully resolved.

Cracker Barrel Old Country Store, Inc. (Nasdaq: CBRL) was established in 1969 in Lebanon, Tenn., and operates 604 company-owned locations in 42 states. For more information, visit www.crackerbarrel.com.

The EEOC enforces federal laws prohibiting employment discrimination. Further information about the EEOC and its mediation program is available on its web site at www.eeoc.gov.

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