

Area Veteran Suing Car Dealer

A Sarasota man is suing an area car dealer, claiming it violated his employment rights as a veteran employee.

Army Sgt. Andrew Mobley, 30, says Gettel Automotive Group, with dealerships in Bradenton and Sarasota, discriminated against him and fired him as a result of his need to be away from work for a military medical examination, according to the lawsuit filed in the United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida.

In February 2001, Mobley was injured in the line of duty. He had been placed on the temporary disability retired list, which required him to receive a military medical examination four to five times a year to determine his fitness to return to active duty, according to the Sept. 19 complaint. Gettel hired Mobley in October 2005, the suit states.

Prior to his termination, he was the sales manager of the Kia Auto Department at the Gettel dealer in Bradenton.

In January 2007, Mobley provided "ample notice" to take off one day of work for the mandatory medical examination in Jacksonville, said Samuel F. Wright, Mobley's attorney. When he reported back to work the next day, he was fired, the suit states.

According to the complaint, Mobley was advised by his supervisor that the reason for his termination was because his "commitment to the Army seems to be more than to us (the employer)."

The suit seeks more than \$400,000 in damages in lost wages, benefits and attorney's fees. Gettel owner Jim Gettel and the Gettel company's attorney, C. Valentine Bates, of Gainesville, did not return phone calls Tuesday.

But according to a response to the complaint filed late last month, the company denies Mobley's "performance of uniformed service on Jan. 17, 2007 was a motivating factor" to fire him on Jan. 18, 2007.