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## Toshiba to pay \$1.3M for price-fixing scheme affecting millions of Washingtonians

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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*Company conspired to inflate prices of a technology once ubiquitous in television screens and computer monitors*

**OLYMPIA** — Attorney General Bob Ferguson today announced that Toshiba Corporation, a multinational conglomerate headquartered in Japan, will pay \$1.3 million as part of the Attorney General's price-fixing lawsuit against manufacturers of a component used in television and computer screens called cathode ray tube, or CRT.

The lawsuit alleges Toshiba and other CRT manufacturers, including LG, Panasonic, Hitachi, Chungwha, Philips and Samsung, engaged in a price-fixing scheme to drive up the cost of CRTs from 1995 to 2007. During those 12 years, the price-fixing conspiracy caused millions of Washington consumers to be overcharged for their CRT televisions and computer monitors.

The consent decree, which will be filed in King County Superior Court, holds Toshiba accountable for its role in the price-fixing scheme. Ferguson will distribute the bulk of the \$1.3 million through a claims process to Washington consumers and state agencies that purchased CRTs during the conspiracy.

"For more than a decade, these foreign manufacturers conspired to artificially inflate their prices," Ferguson said. "We are returning the money back where it belongs: the pockets of Washingtonians."

During the scheme, the companies held secret meetings in which they agreed to fix prices. They also agreed to restrict the supply of CRTs in order to artificially inflate prices.

The companies' scheme allowed them to keep CRT prices high, even as liquid crystal display, or LCD, screens were introduced to the market. Typically, widespread use of a new technology would bring prices down for older technology.

Some of these companies also orchestrated a strikingly similar conspiracy around the same time to drive up prices of LCD screens. In 2016, the Attorney General's Office recovered \$41 million dollars for Washington consumers in its lawsuit over the LCD price-fixing conspiracy.

Until the late 2000s, CRTs were the primary technology for television screens and computer monitors. In 1999, CRT monitors accounted for over 90 percent of the retail market for computer monitors in North America. The technology has largely fallen out of use in recent years, superseded by LCD screens. Toshiba no longer produces CRTs.

The Attorney General will retain a claims administrator to help with the distribution of the funds. Funds will be distributed after all cases are resolved. More details on the claims process will be announced when available.

This payment will bring the total paid so far by CRT manufacturers over their scheme to \$3.65 million. So far, four other conspirators have paid a total of \$2.35 million to Washington:

- LG, \$1.5 million
- Panasonic, \$450,000
- Hitachi, \$275,000
- Chunghwa, \$125,000

The lawsuit is ongoing against Philips and Samsung, with a trial set for July 2019.

Antitrust Division Chief Jonathan Mark and Assistant Attorneys General Justin Wade, Neal Luna, and Eric Newman are handling the case.

The Office of the Attorney General's Antitrust Division is responsible for enforcing the antitrust provisions of Washington's Unfair Business Practices-Consumer Protection Act. The division investigates and litigates complaints of anticompetitive conduct and reviews potentially anticompetitive mergers. The division also brings actions in federal court under the federal antitrust laws. It receives no general fund support, funding its own actions through recoveries made in other cases.

The Antitrust Division investigates complaints about potential anti-competitive activity. For information about filing a complaint, visit <https://fortress.wa.gov/atg/formhandler/ago/AntitrustComplaint.aspx>.

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Contacts:

Brionna Aho, Communications Director, (360) 753-2727; [brionna.aho@atg.wa.gov](mailto:brionna.aho@atg.wa.gov)