

Chase Bank records could show pattern of racketeering

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— JPMorgan Chase's CEO, its former board chairman and a Milwaukee Chase Bank manager say they agree to pay some \$5,444 to settle a six-month old battle with a depositor who balked at hundreds of dollars in phony fees charged to his account.

But the settlement may not come in time to spare the \$1.3 trillion financial services giant from seeing a trove of sensitive corporate information on similar complaints around the country made public Monday morning in answer to a subpoena in the case.

Downtown Milwaukee Chase Bank Manager Jeff Childs, a defendant, at first insisted that a \$150 fee for "insufficient funds" was correct although the elderly customer had plenty of money on deposit in the account, the bank now admits. But meanwhile, as the case was working its way through small claims court, the bank continued to pillage the same account, taking a monthly \$9.95 "software" fee although no such service was requested, pleadings in the case allege. When the customer discovered the bank's illicit monthly fees, Childs pretended to refund the money, but didn't, the pleadings allege. When court documents were supplemented to seek relief for the fees Childs pretended to return, the Bank immediately tried to reverse the charges but the customer refused the money. The next month, the bank charged the fees again.

When the elderly man repeatedly visited the bank to ask defendant Childs to stop taking money without authority, Childs

became afraid, according to court documents, closed the man's two accounts and ordered bank security to bar the customer from ever entering any Chase Bank branch in the world. But that did not end it. After Childs ordered the accounts closed, he failed to return all of the customer's money. When the bank finally acknowledged it had shorted the customer again, they deducted another overdraft fee although it was the bank that had closed the account, court documents assert.

The cases claim that JPMorgan Chase and its officers show a pattern of abuses of the elderly in Wisconsin and account holders nationwide, and cites state racketeering statutes in pleadings.

Documents subpoenaed for Monday would show how widespread complaints about Chase Bank are and whether the bank has so many victims its license to operate in Wisconsin should be pulled under Wisconsin law.

Lawyers for the bank threatened to ask Milwaukee County Circuit Judge John J. DiMotto to force the plaintiff to take the settlement money, and announced that the company had decided to ignore the subpoena.

If the case is not settled, DiMotto has set a hearing for Tuesday morning where he is prepared to hear a motion to dismiss the case without prejudice — a decision that would allow the plaintiff to move the case to federal court and a possible class action under federal racketeering laws.

Meanwhile, the plaintiff's wife, a joint depositor in one of the accounts, has not agreed to settle the case.