UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA Alexandria Division

RAI STRATEGIC HOLDINGS, INC., et al.,)))
Plaintiffs,)
v.) Civil Action No. 1:20-cv-393 (LO/TCB)
ALTRIA CLIENT SERVICES LLC, et al.,	
Defendants.)) _)

<u>ORDER</u>

This matter comes before the Court on Plaintiffs RAI Strategic Holdings, Inc. and R.J. Reynolds Vapor Company's ("Plaintiffs") Motion to Seal (Dkt. 645) and supporting memorandum (Dkt. 648). Plaintiffs request to file under seal an un-redacted version of their Memorandum in Support of their Partial Motion to Stay Further Proceedings on the Claim of Philip Morris Products S.A. Seeking Injunctive Relief ("Memorandum") and accompanying Exhibits A and B. (Dkt. 647.)

District courts have authority to seal court documents "if the public's right of access is outweighed by competing interests." *Ashcraft v. Conoco, Inc.*, 218 F.3d 288, 302 (4th Cir. 2000). Procedurally, a district court may seal court filings if it (1) "provide[s] public notice of the request to seal and allow[s] interested parties a reasonable opportunity to object, (2) consider[s] less drastic alternatives to sealing the documents, and (3) provide[s] specific reasons and factual findings supporting its decision to seal the documents and for rejecting the alternatives." *Id.*Upon consideration of the parties' filings, the Court makes the following findings.



First, Plaintiffs have provided public notice of their request to seal and interested parties have been given a reasonable opportunity to object. Plaintiffs filed their motion to seal and public notice on May 20, 2021. (See Dkts. 635, 636.) Because over seven days have elapsed since Plaintiffs filed the motion to seal and public notice, and no interested party has objected, the Court may treat this motion as uncontested under Local Civil Rule 5(C). See L. Civ. R. 5(C). Accordingly, Plaintiffs have satisfied this requirement under Ashcraft and the Local Civil Rules.

Second, this Court has considered less drastic alternatives. Plaintiffs submitted a redacted version of their Memorandum. (Dkt. 651.) This selective protection of information constitutes the least drastic measure of sealing confidential material. *See Adams v. Object Innovation, Inc.*, No. 3:11cv272-REP-DWD, 2011 WL 7042224, at *4 (E.D. Va. Dec. 5, 2011) "[The] proposal to redact only the proprietary and confidential information, rather than seal the entirety of [the document], constitutes the least drastic method of shielding the information at issue."), *report and recommendation adopted*, 2012 WL 135428 (E.D. Va. Jan. 17, 2012).

Finally, the Court finds reason to seal the redacted portions of Plaintiffs' Memorandum and accompanying exhibits. The redacted portions contain the parties' confidential and proprietary information. Additionally, Exhibit A consists of the ITC's initial determination related to certain products in this matter and Exhibit B is Philip Morris S.A.'s objections and responses to Plaintiffs' interrogatories. This information is protected under the parties' stipulated protective order and includes information related to the parties' confidential financial and technical information, communications, and discovery responses. As a result, public disclosure of the information could bring competitive harm to Plaintiffs, Defendants, and third parties.



Accordingly, it is hereby

ORDERED that Plaintiffs' motions to seal (Dkt. 645) is **GRANTED**. Docket number 647 shall remain permanently under seal.

ENTERED this 2nd day of June, 2021.

Theresa Carroll Buchanan
United States Magistrate Judge

THERESA CARROLL BUCHANAN
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE

Alexandria, Virginia