

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA
ALEXANDRIA DIVISION**

RAI STRATEGIC HOLDINGS, INC. and
R.J. REYNOLDS VAPOR COMPANY,

Plaintiffs and Counterclaim Defendants,

v.

ALTRIA CLIENT SERVICES LLC; PHILIP
MORRIS USA INC.; and PHILIP MORRIS
PRODUCTS S.A.,

Defendants and Counterclaim Plaintiffs.

Case No. 1:20-cv-00393-LO-TCB

**PLAINTIFFS' MEMORANDUM IN RESPONSE TO, AND IN SUPPORT OF, DEFENDANT
PMP'S MOTION TO SEAL DEFENDANT PMP'S OPPOSITION TO PLAINTIFFS' MOTION
FOR RELIEF FROM STIPULATED DEPOSITION DATES AND ACCOMPANYING
EXHIBITS 2, 8, 9, AND 10**

Pursuant to Rule 5.2(d) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and Rule 5(C) of the Local Civil Rules, Plaintiffs RAI Strategic Holdings, Inc., and R.J. Reynolds Vapor Company (collectively, “Plaintiffs”) respectfully submit this memorandum in response to, and in support of, Defendant Philip Morris Products S.A.’s (“PMP”) Motion to Seal Defendant PMP’s Opposition to Plaintiffs’ Motion for Relief from Stipulated Deposition Dates and accompanying Exhibits 2, 8, 9, and 10 (Dkt 722). The proposed sealed material includes Plaintiffs’ confidential, proprietary, and competitively sensitive business, financial, and design information and falls within the scope of the Stipulated Protective Order. (Dkt. 103.) These confidential materials should remain under seal.

I. LEGAL STANDARD

Local Civil Rule 5 requires that, when a party moves to file material under seal that another party has designated as confidential, “the party designating the material as confidential must file a response to the motion complying with requirements (2), (3), and (4) above along with a proposed order” that “shall recite the findings required by governing case law to support the proposed sealing.” Loc. R. Civ. P. 5. These requirements are: “(2) A statement why sealing is necessary, and why another procedure will not suffice, as well as appropriate evidentiary support for the sealing request; (3) References to the governing case law, an analysis of the appropriate standard to be applied for that specific filing, and a description of how that standard has been satisfied; [and] (4) Unless permanent sealing is sought, a statement as to the period of time the party seeks to have the matter maintained under seal and how the matter is to be handled upon unsealing.” *Id.*

“[T]he right [of the public] to inspect and copy judicial records is not absolute.” *Nixon v. Warner Commc’ns, Inc.*, 435 U.S. 589, 598 (1978). Access to court records has been denied where “court files might have become a vehicle for improper purposes.” *Id.* In particular, a corporation’s “strong interest in preserving the confidentiality of its proprietary and trade-secret information ...

may justify partial sealing of court records.” *Doe v. Public Citizen*, 749 F.3d 246, 269 (4th Cir. 2014). As set forth in the Fourth Circuit’s decision in *Ashcraft v. Conoco, Inc.*, a court has the authority to seal court documents “if the public’s right of access is outweighed by competing interests.” 218 F.3d 282, 288 (4th Cir. 2000). Before granting a motion to seal, a court must consider the following: “(1) provide public notice of the request to seal and allow interested parties a reasonable opportunity to object, (2) consider less drastic alternatives to sealing the documents, and (3) provide specific reasons and factual findings supporting its decision to seal the documents and for rejecting the alternatives.” *Id.*; *Adams v. Object Innovation, Inc.*, No. 11-cv-00272-REP-DWD, 2011 WL 7042224, at *4 (E.D. Va. Dec. 5, 2011), *report and recommendation adopted*, 2012 WL 135428 (E.D. Va. Jan. 17, 2012). All three requirements are met here.

The materials that Defendant PMP moves for leave to seal include highly confidential and proprietary business and technological information of the Plaintiffs and should be kept under seal permanently for the reasons described below.

II. DESCRIPTION OF MATERIALS SOUGHT TO BE SEALED

Defendant PMP seeks leave to file under seal an un-redacted version of Defendant PMP’s Opposition to Plaintiffs’ Motion for Relief from Stipulated Deposition Dates and accompanying Exhibits 2, 8, 9, and 10 (Dkt. 722). Specifically, the sensitive information that Defendant moves for leave to file under seal, and to redact from a publicly filed version, includes confidential, proprietary, and commercially sensitive business, financial, and design information of Defendant, Plaintiffs, and/or third parties:

- PMP’s Opposition to Plaintiffs’ Motion for Relief from Stipulated Deposition Dates;

- Exhibit 2, which is confidential correspondence from Jennifer Koh to John Michalik, (June 11, 2021);
- Exhibit 8, confidential deposition excerpts of Noori Brifcani (April 9, 2021);
- Exhibit 9, confidential deposition excerpts of Masja Hoogland (April 7, 2021);
and
- Exhibit 10, confidential deposition excerpts of Edward Kiernan (April 16, 2021).

III. ARGUMENT

A. THE PUBLIC HAS HAD AMPLE NOTICE.

The public has received notice of the request to seal and has had reasonable opportunity to object. Defendant’s sealing motion was publicly docketed in accordance with Local Civil Rule 5, and Plaintiffs now file this memorandum in support of sealing. The “public has had ample opportunity to object” to Defendant’s motion and, since “the Court has received no objections,” the first requirement under *Ashcraft*, 218 F.3d at 302, has been satisfied. *GTSI Corp. v. Wildflower Int’l, Inc.*, No. 1:09-cv-123-JCC, 2009 WL 1248114, at *9 (E.D. Va. Apr. 30, 2009); *U.S. ex rel Carter v. Halliburton Co.*, No. 1:10-cv-864-JCC/TCB, 2011 WL 2077799, at *3 (E.D. Va. May 24, 2011) (“[T]he parties provided public notice of the request to seal that allowed interested parties a reasonable opportunity to object—nearly two weeks.”).

B. DEFENDANTS HAVE SOUGHT THE LEAST DRASTIC MEASURES.

Defendant PMP seeks to seal and redact from the public record only information that the parties must keep confidential pursuant to the Stipulated Protective Order. (Dkt. 103.) Defendant has filed publicly a redacted version of their Opposition to Plaintiffs’ Motion for Relief from Stipulated Deposition Dates and accompanying Exhibits 2, 8, 9, and 10 (Dkt. 722), and has redacted only those limited portions it seeks to seal. This selective and narrow protection of

confidential material constitutes the least drastic method of shielding the information at issue. *Adams*, 2011 WL 7042224, at *4 (The “proposal to redact only the proprietary and confidential information, rather than seal the entirety of his declaration, constitutes the least drastic method of shielding the information at issue.”). The public has no legitimate interest in information that is confidential to Defendant PMP and Plaintiffs. *Id.* at *4. The information that Defendant seeks to seal includes confidential, proprietary, and competitively sensitive business information of Defendant, Plaintiffs, and/or third parties, each of which could face harm if such information were to be released publicly. No procedure other than filing this information under seal is sufficient to preserve the confidential and sensitive nature of the information.

C. THE MATERIALS ARE HIGHLY SENSITIVE AND CONFIDENTIAL.

There is support for filing portions of Defendant PMP’s Opposition to Plaintiffs’ Motion for Relief from Stipulated Deposition Dates and accompanying Exhibits 2, 8, 9, and 10 with a publicly filed version containing strictly limited redactions. Defendant PMP’s Opposition to Plaintiffs’ Motion for Relief from Stipulated Deposition Dates and accompanying Exhibits 2, 8, 9, and 10 contain material that falls within the scope of the Stipulated Protective Order. (Dkt. 103.) Placing these materials under seal is proper because the public’s interest in access is outweighed by a party’s interest in “preserving confidentiality” of the limited amount of confidential information that is “normally unavailable to the public.” *Flexible Benefits Council v. Feltman*, No. 1:08-cv-00371-JCC, 2008 WL 4924711, at *1 (E.D. Va. Nov. 13, 2008); *U.S. ex rel. Carter*, 2011 WL 2077799, at *3. As noted, the portions of Defendant PMP’s Opposition to Plaintiffs’ Motion for Relief from Stipulated Deposition Dates and accompanying Exhibits 2, 8, 9, and 10 that are redacted concern confidential information of Defendant, Plaintiffs, and/or third parties.

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