Attorney General Eliot Spitzer today announced the settlement of a case against the Federal Express Corporation (Fed Ex Express) concerning the company’s accommodation of the religious beliefs and practices of several individuals employed as couriers in New York City.

"FedEx Express prides itself on being an inclusive company," Spitzer said. "The policy and practice memorialized in this agreement go a long way toward achieving this worthwhile goal."

Spitzer began an investigation in 2000 when his office was approached by several former FedEx Express employees who wore their hair in dreadlocks as an expression of their religious beliefs. These employees had been terminated by FedEx Express because of their refusal to cut their hair. After conducting an investigation, Spitzer filed a lawsuit against FedEx Express in 2001.

During the course of discovery, Spitzer’s office learned that FedEx Express had voluntarily addressed many of the concerns underlying the lawsuit. Most importantly, FedEx Express revised its Personal Appearance Policy to allow employees to request an exemption from the policy based on religious reasons.

Pursuant to the settlement agreement, FedEx Express will make further minor adjustments to its Personal Appearance Policy, better inform managerial employees about responding to requests for religious accommodation, and periodically inform the Attorney General’s office about its handling of requests for accommodation involving the wearing of dreadlocks.

Spitzer commended FedEx Express for its willingness to address the concerns relating to religious accommodation.

The case was handled by Assistant Attorney General Brian J. Kreiswirth under the direction of Bureau Chief Dennis D. Parker and Deputy Bureau Chief Natalie R. Williams of the Attorney General’s Civil Rights Bureau.