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Bank papers can be secret

by **GEORGE LEWIS**
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A judge has potentially limited media coverage of a lawsuit involving Richmond Bank.

Madison Circuit Judge Julia Hylton Adams on Friday granted bank lawyers' motion for a protective order.

The order allows either side in the suit to declare pre-trial documents, including depositions, confidential. All depositions will be kept secret 20 days after being recorded, to allow lawyers time to deter-

mine whether they should be termed confidential, the order says.

James Cockrum, an attorney for the bank, has said the intent of the protective order, which he drafted and submitted to Adams Feb. 23, is to protect the confidentiality of bank customers' names, account numbers and balances. Cockrum could not be reached for comment this morning.

But the order goes too far, said Robert Abell, who represents Robert Puckett in his suit against the bank.

Abell says little information concerning specific bank customers would surface

during evidence gathering.

"I believe the order gives ... the ability to identify anything and everything as confidential," Abell said.

Puckett, 46, a former Richmond Bank vice president, says bank officials urged him to cooperate with an investigation by federal authorities into money laundering and then fired him for following their wishes.

Puckett also claims age discrimination in his lawsuit.

Bank officials say Puckett resigned.

However, a bank document provided to

The Register by Puckett states he was terminated. The document is signed by former Richmond Bank human resources vice president Denise Cotton.

"This will just delay things and take up our time, which is frankly part of their strategy," Abell said.

Abell also represents John Landreth, a security agent for the bank who is on a paid leave of absence. Landreth has sued the bank's Chief Executive Officer William Walters and bank security officer Bernie Reddy for defamation of character.

Puckett also has a suit against the bank pending in federal court.