

Bessemer jury awards \$3 million verdict in suit over light fixture idea

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A Bessemer jury last week awarded \$3 million to a Birmingham-area man who had filed a lawsuit claiming fraud and breach of contract against a California company that was to manufacture his idea for a new light fixture.

The jury rendered a verdict in favor of Clarence "Buddy" W. Scroggins and his company Complete Lighting Source, and against Victor Deng and his company DM Technology and Energy Inc. The trial was held before Bessemer Cutoff Circuit Judge Eugene Verin.

The jury awarded Scroggins \$4,750 plus 6 percent interest per year from March 31, 2007, for his breach of contract claim and, on the fraud claims, \$1.5 million in compensatory damages and \$1.5 million in punitive damages.

Scroggins was pleased with the verdict and that Deng was being held responsible, said Jason Yearout, Scroggins' lawyer. "He knew he had been taken advantage of."

Yearout said Scroggins came up with an idea for a new light-emitting diode fixture and went into a business venture with Deng to produce it at a factory that Deng owned or co-owned in China. "Buddy agreed to allow Deng to patent the idea provided both were on the patent.

Deng patented the idea in his name alone, however, and severed ties with Buddy,"

according to a statement from Yearout.

Scroggins entered the deal with Deng in 2006 and sued him in 2007.

During the trial Deng introduced a 2003 patent for the same idea he claimed was from China, Yearout said. "I believe it's clear that the jury concluded that the 2003 patent did not exist," he said.

"This verdict sends a mes-

sage to every entity who comes to Alabama that if you mistreat our citizens, if you defraud our citizens, if you steal from our citizens, you will be held responsible," Yearout stated in his release.

Yearout said it was unclear how many of the LED light fixtures had been sold. Scroggins' light fixture is an aluminum casing with LED lights spread throughout, Yearout said.