

US DOJ requests more time for Microsoft oversight

April 16 2009, By JESSICA MINTZ , AP Technology Writer

(AP) -- The Justice Department asked a federal judge Thursday to extend its watch over some of Microsoft Corp.'s business practices for a second time, saying it needs an extra year and a half to make sure Microsoft's antitrust compliance passes muster.

Microsoft, the federal government and 17 states agreed in 2002 to settle an antitrust battle over the software maker's use of its [Windows](#) monopoly to squash competitors.

The terms of the settlement were initially to expire in November 2007, but U.S. District Court Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly granted a two-year extension covering parts of the agreement. Now the Justice Department wants to extend that to May 2011.

[Microsoft](#) agreed to the extension request. Kollar-Kotelly is expected to address it in a status conference in Washington on Wednesday.

The antitrust settlement requires Microsoft to produce a how-to manual for outside companies that license Microsoft's server software and other programs, explaining how the servers communicate with Windows personal computers. Microsoft is also required to document how various parts of these systems can be used together.

According to a status report released Thursday, Microsoft's documentation efforts are almost done. The company has been barred from charging royalties for the technology until the documentation

reaches a certain level of quality, and the report said Microsoft might reach that point by the end of this year. The technical committee that reviews the documentation will continue to scrutinize the materials and work with Microsoft on changes through the term of the extension.

The government also wants to extend its oversight of the way that Windows gives PC makers and users a way to install non-Microsoft Web browsers and media players and set them as defaults.

The Redmond, Wash.-based [software maker](#) is readying its newest PC operating system, Windows 7, for launch in less than a year. Microsoft has added control panel options to turn off [Internet Explorer](#), Windows [Media Player](#) and Microsoft's hard-drive search software, possibly in response to antitrust concerns.

Microsoft and the Justice Department also agreed Thursday that when the extension is up, the government can't ask for more time to review an operating system than hasn't gone on sale. That means if the version after Windows 7 hasn't been released by May 2011, it won't be subject to antitrust scrutiny under the 2002 agreement.

Shares of Microsoft added 93 cents, or 4.9 percent, to close at \$19.76.

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