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WVU law school gets \$8 million windfall

By Andrew Clevenger

West Virginia University's College of Law received the biggest gift in its history on Friday, \$8 million of unclaimed money from a settlement of a nationwide class-action lawsuit against H&R Block Inc.

The lawsuit, which originated in West Virginia, settled in 2006 for about \$62.5 million for an estimated eight million customers who took up-front payments for anticipated tax refunds.

Kanawha Circuit Judge Duke Bloom presided over the case, and suggested the College of Law as a potential beneficiary of the money left over after settlement payments had been complete. Lawyers for both sides, plus guardian ad litem who had been appointed to oversee the unclaimed money, all approved of the gift.

The gift will increase the law school's endowment by roughly 30 percent, Bloom said during a news conference in his courtroom on Friday.

John W. Fisher II, outgoing dean of the law school, said the money would be used for scholarships and faculty endowments to attract top-tier talent to Morgantown.