

Jenner & Block Helps Pro Bono Client Achieve Resolution After Fifteen Years of Pro Se Litigation

News

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The client first filed suit against California State Prison – Sacramento in 2010 after prison guards and medical staff abruptly discontinued his doctor-prescribed narcotic pain medication — not through any medically appropriate tapering process, but without warning, and without the protocols designed to prevent the pain and withdrawal that followed. The experience constituted cruel and unusual punishment under the Eighth Amendment. What came next was a legal journey spanning fifteen years, one the client spent largely fighting on his own.

Without a lawyer, he lost his first trial in federal court. He appealed pro se — and won. He went back to trial, lost again, and appealed a second time, winning again in 2019 with the assistance of a UCLA Law student clinic. He paid both \$500 appeal filing fees out of pocket, not knowing he was entitled to have those costs taxed against the defendants each time the Ninth Circuit ruled in his favor.

Jenner & Block took over his representation on remand in April 2022. The team moved to reopen discovery and quickly ran into determined resistance: the prison system repeatedly failed to search for or produce responsive documents, forcing the team to litigate compliance for nearly two years. That effort resulted in two Orders to Show Cause pending against the prison, a significant rebuke that reflected the seriousness of the defendants' obstruction. With discovery finally complete, the parties filed cross-motions for summary judgment.

In parallel, the team uncovered the matter of the client's appeal filing fees. Despite prevailing in both Ninth Circuit appeals, he had paid those costs himself. Jenner filed motions in both appellate dockets asking the court to amend its mandates and order costs in the client's favor. The likelihood of success was low; the Ninth Circuit doesn't routinely revisit closed mandates. The court granted both motions anyway, opening the door for the client to seek reimbursement in the trial court as well.

With the summary judgment motions and bills of costs still pending, the parties entered a settlement conference. In June 2025, they reached a favorable resolution — the end of a case that had wound through the courts for fifteen years, through two trials and two appeals, and had cost him far more than any person should have to bear alone.

Several months after the settlement, the client was released on parole. After years of imprisonment and litigation, he has the opportunity for a fresh start.

The Jenner & Block team on this matter included Partner Julie Ann Shepard, Associates Eric Wolff, Tal Ratner Solovey, and Chloe Law, Paralegal **Alonso Ponce**, Legal Assistant **Aja King**, as well as former associates Gregg Washington, Alice Kim, Farryal Siddiqui, and Eddie Crouse.

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