

Jenner & Block Secures Compensation for Pro Bono Client After City of Harvey's Discharge Injunction Violations

News

September 22, 2026

A Jenner & Block team representing pro bono client Rose Thomas secured sanctions against the City of Harvey, Illinois, after the US Bankruptcy Court for the Northern District of Illinois found the city willfully violated the discharge injunction by shutting off Ms. Thomas's water for 273 days following her Chapter 7 discharge.

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For nine months, Ms. Thomas was forced to haul water from friends' homes in five-gallon jugs to drink, bathe, and maintain her home through the Chicago winter, despite repeated attempts to resolve the issue directly with the city. The court called the city's conduct "the most egregious violation of the discharge injunction that I have ever encountered," awarding Ms. Thomas \$41,450 in actual damages and \$41,450 in punitive damages. The court also urged municipalities and utilities nationwide to review their own bankruptcy compliance policies in light of the ruling.

"This case underscores the importance of the discharge injunction as one of the Bankruptcy Code's most fundamental protections," said Special Counsel Bill Williams. "Our focus throughout was making sure Ms. Thomas received the relief she deserved. We are extremely proud of Ms. Thomas's courage and perseverance throughout this ordeal, and we are hopeful that her efforts—and the court's decision—will promote a renewed focus on bankruptcy compliance for years to come."

The Chicago-based Jenner team was led by Special Counsel Bill Williams and Associate Lauren Spungen, under the supervision of Partner Vince Lazar, with valuable trial and post-trial support from Partner Cathy Steege.

Related Lawyers



Bill Williams

Special Counsel
wwilliams@jenner.com
+1 312 840 7257



Lauren S. Spungen

Associate
lspungen@jenner.com
+1 312 840 7449



Vincent E. Lazar

Partner
vlazar@jenner.com
+1 312 923 2989



Catherine Steege

Partner
csteege@jenner.com
+1 312 923 2952

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