



CONSUMER ATTORNEYS OF CALIFORNIA

Seeking Justice for All

Governor signs bill to restore limits on bloated jury fees AB 1481 allows a single \$150 fee for each side in a civil court case

SACRAMENTO (Sept. 17, 2012) – Heeding the urging of Consumer Attorneys of California, Gov. Jerry Brown has signed a bill that corrects a vexing problem arising out of the state’s summer budget deal that inadvertently caused jury fees to balloon.

Brown’s approval of CAOC-backed AB 1481 means that litigants who in large multi-party cases had seen the cost of jury fees jump to more than \$10,000 will now face at most a single fee of \$150 for each side in a case. The new rules took effect immediately with the governor’s signature.

“We are pleased that CAOC was able to get emergency legislation to immediately correct this problem,” said Niall McCarthy, the organization’s president.

McCarthy and other CAOC leaders worked hard during the final month of session to find a legislative solution for the jury fee issue and push the bill through both houses of the Legislature.

The problems arose out of the state’s efforts to balance its deficit-wracked 2012-13 budget. That budget blueprint signed by Brown in late June included language requiring that jury fees, which previously had been applied in the latter stages of a case just before a trial, instead would be charged soon after a case is filed, with a fee of \$150 for each named party in a case. In addition, the fees were no longer refundable if a pre-trial settlement occurred.

State budget writers had intended the shift to be part of a package of court fee increases ordered by Brown that were designed to keep courtrooms from closing. Instead, it became a cascading problem that threatened to put a crimp on the pursuit of civil justice. In cases involving scores of plaintiffs or defendants, the fees mounted.

Alerted to the problem by CAOC members, McCarthy and CEO and Chief Lobbyist Nancy Drabble worked to push through a solution. Under AB 1481, a single \$150 jury fee will now apply to each side in a case, greatly reducing the financial hit for cases involving multiple named parties. That fee will remain nonrefundable.

Although news of AB 1481’s passage spread through courtrooms around the state, court administrators in several counties stuck to the letter of the summer budget deal that boosted the jury fee charges. In anticipation of Brown’s signature on the bill, state court leaders were poised to immediately alert county courts administrators that the new \$150 jury fee limit per side was in effect.

Consumer Attorneys of California is a professional organization of plaintiffs’ attorneys representing consumers seeking accountability against wrongdoers in cases involving personal injury, product liability, environmental degradation and other causes.

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