

Wednesday, May 18, 2016

Litigation financier pledges \$300,000 for Irvine law school's new institute

By Meghann M. Cuniff

Bentham IMF, a litigation finance fund, has pledged \$300,000 toward UC Irvine School of Law's new Civil Justice Research Institute, publicly declaring its stake in what's described as an attempt to counter the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's anti-litigation Institute for Legal Reform.

The support comes amid an unprecedented rise in portfolio litigation financing. The chamber's Institute for Legal Reform says commercial litigation funds lead to more frivolous claims.

Bentham's involvement in them includes a \$30 million pledge announced last November that's funding at least 60 cases by seven U.S. law firms.

In its 15 years of existence, Bentham has financed more than 180 commercial lawsuits that have generated more than \$1.7 million in recoveries, according to the company.

Set to open once an interim executive director is secured, the Civil Justice Research Institute is to focus on what supporters say contributes to unfair access to the civil justice system, from the proliferation of arbitration clauses to restrictions on class actions and punitive damages and decreased funding for state and federal courts.

Bentham's donation announcement calls it "an academic and intellectual counterweight to the U.S. Chamber's Institute for Legal Reform, an outspoken critic of litigation, generally."

The Institute for Legal Reform, based in Washington, D.C., appears unmoved by the announced rivalry.

"We wish them the best of luck in their endeavor," said Lisa A. Reckord, the group's president, in a statement released through a spokesman.

Bentham's donation eclipses a \$250,000 gift from Richard K. Bridgeford, founding partner of Bridgeford, Gleason & Artinian and the lead supporter in approximately \$1 million already donated when UC Irvine announced the institute's launch last month.

"Economic imbalances have an increasing impact on the outcome of civil disputes, frequently favoring parties with the deepest pockets rather than those with meritorious claims," said Ralph Sutton, Bentham's chief investment officer.

Sutton noted the involvement of UCI School of Law Dean Erwin Chemerinsky, who will chair the institute, and said the institute "is expected to have a profound impact on legal scholarship."

Chemerinsky thanked Bentham for its support "not just in its financial backing but in its outspoken endorsement of our charter."

SPECIAL REPORT

Top 40 Under 40



Friday Podcast

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Labor/Employment

Uber objections escalate in frequency and severity

Multiple plaintiffs' attorneys have opposed the up to \$100 million settlement Uber Technologies Inc. reached with California and Massachusetts drivers.

Education

Bar leader proposes revised practical skills program

The State Bar top executive's plan calls for less experiential learning than previously suggested.

Litigation

LAUSD settles for \$88 million in sexual misconduct cases

The Los Angeles Unified Schools District will pay \$88 million in settlement money to 30 victims who were abused at two district elementary schools.

Filmmaker files lawsuit against Facebook for impostor account

Vincent Gallo contends the company failed to respond to complaints about the fake account.

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Bentham IMF says the UC Irvine School of Law's Civil Justice Research Institute will counter the work of the Institute for Legal Reform.

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Vinson & Elkins opens office in Taiwan

The new location will be headed by two intellectual property partners who joined the firm from Perkins Coie in September.

Obituaries

Services Thursday for retired LA Superior Court Judge Kenneth Black

Known for his photographic memory and expertise in family law, the retired judge died from complications of pneumonia on May 11. He was 66.

Education

USC asks state Supreme Court to review ruling on campus sex assault adjudication

The private university called the 2nd District Court of Appeal's expansion of fair procedure rights "unprecedented."

Government

California faces fiscal ruin from unsustainable government pension programs

Meaningful pension reform most likely will require an amendment to the California Constitution. By **Chuck Reed**

Criminal

Legislature: don't eliminate the statute of limitations for rape

When a statute of limitations is eliminated, justice evaporates for both the innocent and the victim. By **Garrick Byers**

Intellectual Property

Patent lawsuits are down, but not out

What some are calling a "lull" may be a signal that technology companies are expanding their patent arsenals with better quality patents to enforce when necessary. By **Karineh Khachatourian**

Government

San Francisco is leading the way in environmentally conscious bonds

A "green bonds" designation can highlight to a municipal issuer's stakeholders that infrastructure work which needs to be done and financed has a significant environmental benefit. By **Stephen A. Spitz**

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By increasing the requisite degree of proof required of plaintiffs, the California Supreme Court gave an advantage to employers. By **Thomas Dorogi**

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The governor, attorney general and the state