

TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY **FRIDAY** TODAY

Bookmark Reprints

Questions and Comments

NEWS RULINGS VERDICTS

Friday, July 31, 2015

School District to pay \$20.5 million in illegal bus stop case

Inland Empire school district found solely liable for forcing students to cross highway illegally

By America Hernandez

A San Bernardino jury Thursday awarded \$20.5 million to the mother of a 15-year-old killed while crossing five lanes of highway traffic to an illegal school bus stop in 2010. *Jung v Chaffey et al.*, CIVDS1112258 (San Bernardino Super. Ct., filed Oct. 24, 2011).

Chaffey Joint Union High School District was found liable by the court during a pretrial sanctions hearing after evidence revealed that the school district concealed damning emails and other documents pertaining to the illegal bus stop for nearly five years.

The jury exonerated the deceased student and the driver who struck him after 4½ hours of deliberation Thursday. Chaffey alone will pay noneconomic damages for past and future suffering.

"This was a case of absolute principle, for both my client and the firm, that had to go to verdict once it started," said plaintiff's counsel Rahul Ravipudi, partner at Panish, Shea & Boyle LLP. "This case shows dishonesty is not rewarded, and I think this will be a wake up call to school districts across the state to make sure they're doing things legally, appropriately, and safely for the benefit of our children."

In 2010 the district eliminated one of two bus stops located on either side of five lanes of highway, forcing students to illegally cross through traffic in an unmarked crosswalk without traffic signals or a crossing guard.

The decision to remove the bus stop was made without alerting the California Highway Patrol or the school district's superintendent.

The school district previously denied the bus stop's existence in court and refused to acknowledge or authenticate documents referring to the stop obtained by plaintiff's counsel.

After witness depositions revealed that the district instructed officials to routinely destroy documents at the end of every school year, San Bernardino County Superior Court Judge Brian S. McCarville ordered a hearing to consider the testimony of school district employees and subsequently found them incredible, court documents show.

A flash drive containing damning evidence, including email exchanges between school officials discussing the boy's health days after the crash, was submitted to the court by the school district.

The district, represented by Stephen M. Harber of McCune & Harber LLP, maintained the emails and school bus route maps proving the stop's existence had been accidentally placed in a computer folder containing attorney-client privileged correspondence and thus not found during discovery.

Harber did not respond to requests for comment.

"Since this tragedy for the Jun family, the district has redoubled our efforts and commitment to this priority," the school district said in a written statement Thursday.

america_hernandez@dailyjournal.com

Litigation

School District to pay \$20.5 million in illegal bus stop case

A San Bernardino jury found Chaffey Joint Union High School District liable for the death of a 15-year-old student killed while crossing to an illegal school bus stop across five lanes of highway traffic.

Securities

Securities class actions report are lower than average, according to report

The number of plaintiffs filing class action securities suits against companies listed on U.S. exchanges thus far this year - and the value of damages they sought - is below historical averages.

Government

Why it's easier to prosecute certain businesses

The fact is, some companies - like banks - are easier to prosecute than others - like automobile manufacturers - because some laws better address corporate crime than others. By **Matthew L. Schwartz**

Litigation

Convent sale ruled 'improper and invalid' but tenant can stay - for now

To a chorus of audible gasps, Superior Court Judge James C. Chalfant on Thursday called the sale of a Los Feliz convent by a group of nuns to a local restaurateur "improper and invalid," but denied in part an injunction to ban her from the

Stage set for trial over music contract dispute

A District Court Judge denied summary judgment on Wednesday to electronic dance music giant SFX Entertainment Inc. and its chairman, setting the stage for an October trial over a contract dispute. Plaintiffs are seeking damages in excess of \$100 million.

Trial set in suit between Veolia and Watts nonprofit

Watts Labor Community Action Committee claims the transportation giant offered to partner on a project to obtain bus and rail contracts, then left the South Los Angeles nonprofit with a destroyed building.

Solo and Small Firms

Generous Defenders

With a bevy of big-name clients and a willingness to share strategies with other attorneys, Arguedas, Cassman & Headley LLP has built a reputation as one of the leading criminal defense firms in the state.

Environmental

Suit seeks injunction against new oil extraction permits

A lawsuit filed in Sacramento County Superior Court alleges Gov. Jerry Brown and his administration are breaking the law and ignoring the science on fracking.

CHAMPIONS OF JUSTICE

Civil Rights KRLA, KFVB, KABC, KCBQ, KTIE, KTKZ, KDOW,