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# Brian J. Panish

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So far, Panish's efforts are working as he and a coalition of consumer advocates seek to curb state lawmakers' enthusiasm for bailing out California's investor-owned electric and natural gas utilities for the estimated \$17 billion they might owe over wildfire damages.

In August a conference committee abandoned for this year an idea to change liability rules by enacting legislation that could let the utilities off the hook. But they proposed another plan that would let them issue bonds to cover fire costs that customers would pay off through their monthly bills. "I'm behind the scenes with this," Panish said. "We have guys in my firm doing a lot of work on it."

Panish and colleague Rahul Ravipudi are individual plaintiffs' co-lead counsel in litigation over the fires in cases proceeding up and down the state. Southern California Fire Cases, JCCP 4965 (L.A. Super. Ct., filed April 18, 2018); Northern California Fire Cases, JCCP 4955 (San Francisco Super. Ct., filed Oct 31, 2017).

But at the moment, Panish would rather talk high school football. The St. John Bosco High School alum and former player was a lead donor on a new \$7.2 million stadium dedicated at a groundbreaking ceremony a year ago in Bellflower that honored his contributions. "I played safety, and 44 years later I still hold the record for interceptions at nine," he said. After graduating in 1975 he returned to the school as head football coach in 1980 and 1981, leading the team to two Del Ray League titles. In an interview with a local paper he credited the school with making him a success, "The lessons I learned helped me be a better person and prepared me for life," he said. "I owe a great debt of gratitude for them. I went there at a time in my life when I didn't have all my values sorted out, and they helped me develop my moral compass spiritually, academically and athletically."

When Panish spoke with the Daily Journal in late August he'd been to both games played so far by the St. John Bosco Braves. "We won them by a combined score of 107 to zero," he said.

Also in August Panish received good news from a state appellate panel: affirmance of a \$15.3 million award he won four years ago in a personal injury case. The figure is now more than \$20 million with interest, he said. The panel rejected defense claims that Panish committed misconduct in an over-aggressive closing argument. *Francisco v. Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District*, A142884 (Cal. App. 1st Dist., filed Sept. 2, 2014).

"I'm street, I'm with the people," Panish said, referring to his courtroom style. "I played football, and I relate to jurors."

— John Roemer