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Top Labor & Employment Lawyers 2022

Keith P. More

BENTLEY & MORE LLP
NEWPORT BEACH



Keith P. More, the managing partner at Bentley & More LLP, is now in his thirty-fourth year in practice. He has spent decades attaining a position as one of the top workers' compensation authorities in California. More and law partner Gregory L. Bentley opened the doors of their plaintiff-side personal injury firm in 2016.

"The deeply bureaucratic workers comp system in this state has been distorted by the insurance industry," More said. "The tradeoff in the system is supposed to be that workers can't sue their employer, but instead they get compensated without having to prove fault. Yet we have seen decades of cuts in the money that eventually goes to the worker."

Insurance company-designed medical provider networks and layers of review complicate cases and slow payouts, he added. "I spend 65% of my time just getting treatment for clients who have been catastrophically injured.

More worked for years on the case of a young laborer at a ski lodge, then 20, who fell from a roof without a safety harness or other protection. He struck his neck in the fall and became paralyzed. That was in 2009. His worker's comp claim eventually resulted in a 100% disability determination and the need for lifetime medical treatment, with insurers at first agreeing only to pay low monthly benefits.

"We'd sought a lump sum, but they would not agree for years," More said. After persistent requests, the insurers agreed to negotiate, offering \$3 million. "We pushed hard and ended up with a \$5.1 million structured payout. My client is happy, and under the circumstances, it's a good outcome. *DeMun v. Squaw Valley Resort LLC*, ADJ 7699249

(WCAB, settled Jan. 20, 2022).

The pandemic added further problems to the system, More said. A worker contracted the coronavirus at a company conference, even though the company's chairman warned in a memo that others had been sickened. After the man was hospitalized and died, the company rejected his family's worker's comp claim and denied that he had gotten ill at the conference.

"My civil litigation background was useful here in seeking full discovery," More said, "when we pushed to take depositions and obtained the memo. Once we did that, they paid the death benefits and eventually settled." *Sample v. Kinder Morgan Inc.*, ADJ 13121318 (WCAB, settled Aug. 18, 2020).

In a third matter, the widow of a man stabbed to death by a coworker at a university campus hired More to handle his case after the school denied he was an employee. "We found media statements by campus officials mourning the death of 'one of our own,'" and again I scheduled depositions of everyone I could find. The insurers decided to pay maximum death benefits." *Chen v. California State University Fullerton*, ADJ 12992290 (WCAB, settled Jan. 29, 2021).

"I love what I do," More said. "I thrive on it."

— John Roemer