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TOP LABOR & EMPLOYMENT LAWYERS 2023



KEITH P. MORE
Bentley & More LLP
Newport Beach

Keith P. More is a veteran workers' compensation specialist whose deep familiarity with the state's Department of Industrial Relations bureaucracy allows him to maximize recoveries for clients injured on the job. He is a name partner at Bentley & More LLP, an 11-lawyer personal injury boutique founded in 2016.

"After 34 years, I'm still having fabulous success," said More, who earlier in his career was mentored by a workers comp pioneer, the late Norman Berman, and who has long worked with law partner Jose Gonzalez.

"Norm Berman was fluent in Spanish and had a great understanding of the Hispanic community and how workers were so often taken advantage of," More said. "After he retired, Jose became my young associate and we kept that spirit going. Jose remains with us to this day."

More recently settled the case of a 66-year-old laborer, Fermin Barragan, who fell off a 10-foot ladder at a construction site and sustained a traumatic brain injury. Family members contacted More after reporting that representatives of the employer came to the hospital and offered \$30,000 to settle the case.

"They knew that wasn't right," More said. "The man was experiencing massive cognitive issues, and he'd require 24/7 home health care." The injury took place in 2018, with insurers paying for his care but unwilling to negotiate a final settlement until Barragan's condition was stable. In February 2023, they agreed to pay \$2.36 million. *Barragan v. GDT*

Framing Inc. and Zurich Los Angeles, ADJ11678242 (WCAB, filed Oct. 2, 2018).

"That's new money, beyond what they paid so far," More said. "A lot of insurance companies will look at an injured worker who is beyond retirement age and calculate the life expectancy, then decide that maybe they can wait the claim out. It's a sick way to look at things, but it's a routine game they play."

Now that the settlement is complete, More plans to take the matter further. He said he's one of the rare workers comp lawyers with extensive litigation experience who files so-called "serious and willful claims" against employers who violate workplace rules that arguably cause accidents.

"The GDT Framing standard is that above seven and a half feet, their workers must wear safety harnesses, and Mr. Barragan wasn't wearing one," More said. "This is almost like a personal injury claim, only through the worker's comp system. The penalty is 50% of the settlement plus prior costs of care, and the employer has to pay it."

"I look forward to pushing for more compensation for Mr. Barragan."

—John Roemer

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