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TOP PLAINTIFF LAWYERS

CONSUMER PROTECTION **PERSONAL INJURY/MASS TORT AND COMPLEX BUSINESS LITIGATION**



GREG BENTLEY

BENTLEY & MORE LLP

NEWPORT BEACH

When a mother and her daughter were struck in a crosswalk with no markings in Southern California, the public entity responsible for the intersection had already received complaints about crashes and near misses there. It had not installed traffic controls. Gregory Bentley litigated the case for years, taking dozens of depositions to build a history showing the entity knew of the danger before his clients suffered brain and orthopedic injuries. In August, he obtained a $22.9 million settlement.

"These are tough cases, as you have to navigate immunities and the public entities' focus on the fault of the driver that hit the clients while crossing the street," Bentley said. "Here, they missed so many opportunities to correct this dangerous road that it almost became obvious it was dangerous. You have to push, and we do."

Bentley also secured a $23.5 million settlement for a roadway worker who sustained a brain injury when a box truck struck a vehicle parked on the shoulder, crossed a guardrail and hit him. The worker will require care for the rest of his life. Bentley had to prove how the crash happened and show the care, treatment and support the client will need in the years ahead.

Another case shows how the firm combines practice areas. A client suffered a spinal cord injury after tripping on a walkway built without permits. Bentley obtained an $8 million settlement from a third party and a waiver of the workers' compensation lien, while the firm's workers' compensation team recovered $2.5 million for medical care and lost income.

"That $10.5 million combined resolution shows why our ability to coordinate personal-injury and workers' compensation claims can materially change the client's ultimate recovery," he said.

Bentley said the evidence in his cases keeps getting more technical. In a wrongful death case involving a crane, data downloaded from a computer helped show how the operator handled the load, that overloading occurred and why liability rested with the crane company.

Bentley began his career defending companies. "Early in my career, I worked on the defense side representing corporations, but I quickly realized that I wanted to use my trial skills for injured people rather than protect companies from accountability," he said. He went on to cofound Bentley & More LLP, where he is a partner.

In choosing cases, he looks first at the people he would represent. "It starts with the client. I am a firm believer that if you have a good client, the jury will do what they can to help," Bentley said.

He prepares every case for a jury. "I do not prepare a case to settle; I prepare it to win at trial, and that preparation gives the client leverage and genuine choices about resolution," Bentley said.

Bentley credits lessons from trial lawyers he met through Consumer Attorneys of California, the American Board of Trial Advocates, the American College of Trial Lawyers and the International Academy of Trial Lawyers, and he works to pass them on. "Trial lawyers get better when experienced lawyers share what works, explain what went wrong and give the next generation real opportunities to take responsibility," he said.

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