

Nicol E. Hajjar (SBN 303102)
nicol.hajjar@wilshirelawfirm.com
Kristen Tojo (SBN 310464)
kristen.tojo@wilshirelawfirm.com
Trenten N. Bilodeaux (SBN 332692)
trenten.bilodeaux@wilshirelawfirm.com
WILSHIRE LAW FIRM, PLC
660 S. Figueroa Street, Sky Lobby
Los Angeles, California 90017
Telephone: (213) 381-9988
Facsimile: (213) 381-9989

Attorneys for Plaintiff

SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
FOR THE COUNTY OF MADERA

MAURICIO ESPARZA-VALDEZ, individually,
and on behalf of all others similarly situated,

Plaintiff,

v.

VEZINA INDUSTRIES, INC., a corporation;
and DOES 1 through 10, inclusive,

Defendants

Case No.: MCV095037

*[Assigned for All Purposes to the Honorable
Eric J. LiCalsi, Dept. 44]*

**DECLARATION OF NICOL E. HAJJAR
IN SUPPORT OF PLAINTIFF'S
NOTICE OF MOTION AND MOTION
FOR FINAL APPROVAL OF CLASS
ACTION AND PAGA SETTLEMENT**

Final Approval Hearing:

Date: October 14, 2026

Time: 8:30 a.m.

Dept.: 44

Action Filed: April 30, 2025

DECLARATION OF NICOL E. HAJJAR

I, Nicol E. Hajjar, declare as follows:

1. I am an attorney at law licensed to practice before all of the courts of the State of California. I am a Partner at Wilshire Law Firm, PLC (“WLF” or “Class Counsel”), counsel of record for Plaintiff Mauricio Esparza-Valdez (“Plaintiff”). I have personal knowledge of the facts set forth in this declaration and could and would competently testify to them under oath if called as a witness.

2. I submit this declaration in support of Plaintiff’s Motion for Final Approval of Class Action and PAGA Settlement.

3. Plaintiff is represented by WLF. The attorneys at WLF performed significant work and expended litigation costs in prosecuting this matter with no guarantee of payment.

4. WLF was selected by Best Lawyers and U.S. News & World Report as one of the nation’s Best Law Firms since 2020 and is comprised of more than 100 attorneys and over 600 employees. WLF is actively and continuously practicing in employment litigation, representing employees in both individual and class actions in both state and federal courts throughout California.

5. WLF is qualified to handle this Litigation because its attorneys are experienced in litigating Labor Code violations in individual, class action, and representative action cases. WLF has handled, and is currently handling, numerous wage and hour class action lawsuits, as well as class actions involving consumer rights and data privacy litigation.

6. I am a Partner at WLF. My practice is focused on advocating for the rights of employees in class action litigation and individual state and federal litigation. I graduated from Western State College of Law and was admitted to practice in California in 2015. I am currently the primary attorney in charge of litigating several class action cases. I was selected to serve on CAOC’s Board of Directors in 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024 and an active member of CAALA, CELA. I sit on CELA’s women’s committee as the co-chair of the wage and hour committee and was selected to speak at CELA’s 2020 Advanced Wage & Hour Seminar. Further, I have extensively litigated employment cases for the past eight years, including a successful wage and

1 hour trial wherein the jury awarded the plaintiff wage and hour damages and the plaintiff was
2 awarded PAGA penalties. I have received numerous awards for my legal work. The National Trial
3 Attorneys selected me as a “Top 10 Wage and Hour Trial Lawyer,” and a “Top 40 Under 40”
4 attorney. Super Lawyers selected me as one of their “Rising Stars” every year since 2018.

5 7. Kristen Tojo is a ten-year Senior Attorney at Wilshire Law Firm, PLC. She was
6 admitted to practice law in the State of California and the Central and Eastern Districts of
7 California. She graduated from University of California, Los Angeles and received her Juris
8 Doctor from the University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law. Since graduating law school,
9 she has focused her legal work exclusively on Plaintiff-side employment litigation including both
10 FEHA individual and wage and hour class action litigation. Before rejoining Wilshire Law Firm,
11 she practiced in a respected wage-and-hour law firm where she worked on dozens of class
12 actions. She has almost four years of experience in wage-and-hour class action cases. Her current
13 contingent billing rate for this case is \$550 per hour, which is consistent with her level of
14 experience in the wage and hour arena. Ms. Tojo currently bills at an hourly rate of \$800.00.

15 8. Trenten N. Bilodeaux is an Associate Attorney at WLF. He is currently in his sixth
16 year of practice involving corporate entities in complex class action litigation in state and federal
17 courts. He is admitted to practice before all courts in the State of California, the State of Oregon,
18 and the United States District Court for the Northern, Eastern, and Central Districts of California.
19 Over the course of his career, he has participated in numerous class action settlements for similar
20 employment and wage claims as those present here. Prior to practice, he graduated cum laude with
21 a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from California State University, Chico before accepting a
22 scholarship to attend the University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law where he achieved a
23 Juris Doctorate and graduated with honors in 2020. Mr. Bilodeaux currently bills at an hourly rate
24 of \$700.00.

25 9. Alan Wilcox obtained his Bachelor’s degree from the University of California,
26 Berkeley in 2007. He graduated from Pepperdine University’s School of Law and became a
27 member of the California State Bar in 2012. Throughout Mr. Wilcox’s career up until his
28 employment at WLF, he was essentially continuously employed as a civil litigation attorney at

multiple law firms. He has represented clients in both state and federal Courts in a wide variety of matters, including contract disputes, wrongful foreclosure, unlawful detainer, divorce, product defect, tort, and employment. Mr. Wilcox's billed at an hourly rate of \$950.00.

10. Conor J.D. Gomez was an Attorney at WLF. Mr. Gomez was responsible for finalizing resolved class action and PAGA matters, ensuring that they were carried through the approval and distribution process in an efficient manner and in compliance with court orders. He graduated from the University of California, Los Angeles School of Law in May 2020. Mr. Gomez passed the California Bar Examination on his first attempt and was admitted to practice in May 2021. He is admitted to practice law in the State of California and before the Northern District of California. Mr. Gomez billed at an hourly rate of \$575.

11. WLF's hourly rates are comparable to those charged by other class action plaintiffs' counsel and the firms defending class actions. WLF's rates are well within the range of hourly rates that the Los Angeles legal marketplace would compensate counsel for similar services accomplishing similar results. For example, in *Bronshteyn v. State of California*, Los Angeles County Superior Ct. No. 19SMCV00057, Order Granting Plaintiff's Motion for Statutory Attorneys' Fees and Costs filed March 30, 2023, an employment action brought by two small law firms (Levy, Vinick, Burrell & Hyams LLP and Law Offices of Wendy Musell), the court found that counsel's 2022 hourly rates of \$1,100 and \$1,000 per hour were reasonable for the plaintiff's five senior attorneys, including \$1,000 per hour for the plaintiff's 23-year lead counsel and \$850 per hour for a senior associate. These rates were then augmented by a 1.75 lodestar multiplier and affirmed by the California Court of Appeals. The rates (and multiplier) requested here are well in line with those found reasonable in *Bronshteyn*. In *Tran v. Golden State FC LLC, et al.* (LASC Case No. BC699931), Fee Order filed 4/8/2022, the court found hourly rates of \$1,300 per hour reasonable for plaintiff's 32-year attorney and \$1,000 per hour reasonable for a 14-year attorney. The multiplier here is even more compelling given Class Counsel represents approximately 236 Class Members.

12. In support of the reasonableness of WLF's hourly rates, attached as **Exhibit 1** is a true and correct excerpt from the *2025 Real Rate Report* published by Wolters Kluwer. The Real

1 Rate Report is widely relied upon in the legal industry because it is derived from anonymized
2 billing data taken from actual law firm invoices that were submitted to clients and approved for
3 payment, rather than from voluntary surveys or self-reported rates. Although the report refers to
4 “2025” rates, the data reflects rates charged by law firms during the first half of 2024 and therefore
5 represents the most recent available objective evidence of prevailing market rates.

6 a. The report provides rate information filtered by geographic market, practice
7 type, and timekeeper role. Page 26 reports third-quartile rates for attorneys handling litigation
8 matters in San Francisco and San Jose, which are the primary Northern California legal markets
9 and serve as the dominant rate-setting centers for complex litigation throughout the region. In San
10 Francisco, the dataset shows third-quartile hourly rates of \$1,378 for litigation partners and \$875
11 for associates. In San Jose, the report shows third-quartile hourly rates of \$1,250 for litigation
12 partners and \$1,030 for associates. The report’s in-depth city analyses for San Francisco and San
13 Jose further confirm that these markets consistently reflect some of the highest billing rates in the
14 country for experienced litigators and serve as the benchmark markets for Northern California legal
15 services. Courts evaluating fee requests in Madera routinely look to the prevailing rates in the
16 nearest major metropolitan markets as benchmarks when assessing reasonableness. The closest and
17 most relevant comparison markets for Madera litigation are San Francisco and San Jose, where
18 experienced partners routinely bill well above \$1,200 per hour based on rates actually charged to
19 clients.

20 b. The 2025 Real Rate Report’s practice-area-specific data further supports this
21 conclusion. Page 81 provides third-quartile rates for the detailed practice category “Employment
22 and Labor: Other Litigation,” which is directly analogous to the type of work performed in this
23 case. That dataset includes 24 partners and 14 associates and shows a third-quartile rate of \$1,252
24 per hour for partners and \$564 per hour for associates. These figures demonstrate that even within
25 the specialized employment litigation market, partners regularly bill well above \$1,200 per hour
26 based on rates actually charged to clients. When this practice-specific benchmark is considered
27 together with the broader regional market data, it confirms that WLF’s hourly rate for highly
28 experienced counsel in a representative employment action falls within the upper range of

1 prevailing market rates rather than outside it.

2 c. The Real Rate Report does not provide 1st quartile or 4th quartile rates,
3 presumably to provide a sense of the average attorney billing rates. Importantly, the third quartile
4 represents the point below which 75% of rates fall; it is not a cap on reasonable rates. By definition,
5 a substantial portion of partners in the relevant benchmark market routinely bill above that level,
6 particularly those with extensive experience, specialized expertise, or leadership roles in complex
7 litigation. Courts evaluating fee requests recognize that leading counsel in complex or
8 representative actions may reasonably bill above median or third-quartile benchmarks where their
9 experience, results obtained, and responsibilities justify higher rates. We firmly believe WLF
10 belongs in the 4th quartile of attorney billing rates in Northern California. As previously discussed,
11 WLF is a nationally recognized employment litigation firm that has been named one of the nation's
12 *Best Law Firms* by U.S. News & World Report and Best Lawyers since 2020, and its attorneys
13 regularly litigate complex wage-and-hour class and representative actions throughout California. I
14 am a UCLA School of Law graduate with nearly three decades of experience litigating labor and
15 employment matters—including as a partner and holding leadership roles at major international
16 law firms when I was on the defense side for 26 years, as well as substantial recent class and
17 representative action results including being one of the few attorneys in the state of California to
18 try a wage and hour class action to verdict (and prevail), and achieving results exceeding \$225
19 million in just the last three years since starting to settle matters as a plaintiffs' attorney. My
20 credentials and experience place my \$1,500 hourly rate within the highest tier of Northern
21 California employment litigators, consistent with rates that would fall within the fourth quartile
22 beyond those reported in the Real Rate Report.

23 13. In an article entitled "Big Law Rates Topping \$2,000 Leave Value 'In Eye of
24 Beholder,'" written by Roy Strom and published by Bloomberg Law on June 9, 2022, the author
25 describes how Big Law firms have crossed the \$2,000-per hour rate. The article also notes that
26 law firm rates have been increasing by just under 3% per year. A true and correct copy of this
27 article is attached hereto as **Exhibit 2**.

28 14. WLF has performed significant work and incurred litigation costs in prosecuting

1 this matter with no guarantee of any payment. The efforts expended by Class Counsel to achieve
2 this result include, but are not limited to, the following:

- 3 a. the investigation of the matter, including meeting with Plaintiff, reviewing
4 Defendant's Vezina Industries, Inc. ("Defendant") policies, and requesting and
5 reviewing Plaintiff's time and pay records, personnel file, and exploring
6 Defendant's corporate structure;
- 7 b. filing the Action;
- 8 c. attending status conferences and meeting and conferring with Defendant
9 regarding the case;
- 10 d. meeting and conferring with Defendant regarding mediation, exchange of
11 informal discovery beforehand, and negotiating with opposing counsel
12 regarding the parameters thereof;
- 13 e. selecting a mediator and mediation date;
- 14 f. working with opposing counsel for the receipt of a representative sampling and
15 analyzing the same with the aid of a consultant and Plaintiff to perform analyses
16 of liability and exposure prior to attendance of the mediation in this matter;
- 17 g. reviewing policy documents from Defendant and researching applicable
18 defenses;
- 19 h. preparing the mediation brief and damages model for use at mediation;
- 20 i. attending the mediation;
- 21 j. communicating with Plaintiff;
- 22 k. negotiating, finalizing and fully executing the settlement agreement;
- 23 l. preparing and filing the Motion for Preliminary Approval and supporting
24 documents;
- 25 m. attending the hearing on Motion for Preliminary Approval;
- 26 n. communicating with any Class Members who sought additional information
27 regarding the settlement; and
- 28 o. preparing the instant Motion for Final Approval and supporting documents.

15. WLF's current lodestar reflects the efficiencies achieved by attorneys experienced in this field with **94** hours of work resulting in \$87,262.50 in fees. The chart below shows the calculation of hours spent by each of WLF's attorneys on this case:

Attorney	Hours	Hourly Rate	Total
Nicol E. Hajjar	36	\$1,200.00	\$43,200
Kristen Tojo	45	\$800.00	\$36,000
Trenten N. Bilodeaux	2	\$700.00	\$1,400
Alan Wilcox	0.9	\$950.00	\$855.00
Conor J.D. Gomez	10.1	\$575.00	\$5,807.50
TOTAL	94		\$87,262.50

16. This amount results in a modest 1.04 multiplier. Class Counsel's lodestar does not include the time Class Counsel will spend at the Final Approval Hearing and assisting the Settlement Administrator following final approval. Class Counsel dedicated significant resources to this case by dividing the tasks required according to skill level. The hours expended by each attorney were not duplicative and reflect the extensive investigation and analysis that was required to achieve this Settlement. This time could have been spent on other potentially lucrative cases. Class Counsel's lodestar reflects the efficiencies achieved by attorneys experienced in this field. Moreover, Class Counsel has singularly assumed the risk and costs of litigation purely on a contingency basis. And, while Plaintiff is confident in the merits of his claims, a legitimate controversy exists as to each cause of action, posing an actual risk that Plaintiff may not succeed at class certification and/or trial. Any of these obstacles could have prevented recovery completely, meaning Class Counsel would have been left with no compensation for all the time and money invested in litigating this case. Despite these risks, Class Counsel took this case on a contingency basis so that Class Members (a particularly vulnerable group of hourly paid workers) could be compensated for their unpaid wages. Consequently, Class Counsel was precluded from focusing

1 on, or taking on, other cases which could have resulted in a larger, and less risky, monetary gain.

2 17. In litigation costs, Wilshire Law Firm, PLC, has spent \$16,819.90 on items such as
3 filing fees, service fees, mediation fees, and expert fees. A true and correct copy of a breakdown
4 of costs incurred by my office is attached hereto as **Exhibit 3**. Additionally, we anticipate incurring
5 \$300.00 in future costs for filing fees and service fees for a total of \$17,119.90 in costs. Since Class
6 Counsel's costs did not reach the maximum of \$20,000.00, the remaining \$2,880.10 will revert to
7 and increase the Net Settlement Amount. These costs were reasonable and necessary to prosecute
8 this case and obtain the results achieved.

9 18. Class Counsel has negotiated a settlement here that they believe is fair, reasonable,
10 and adequate based on their prior experience litigating these type of cases.

11 19. To date, the LWDA has not responded to or objected to the Settlement in this matter.

12 I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the foregoing
13 is true and correct.

14 Executed on September 18, 2026 at Los Angeles, California.

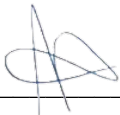
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18 Nicol E. Hajjar
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EXHIBIT 1



ELM Solutions

2025 Real Rate Report[®] powered by LegalVIEW[®] DynamicInsights

The industry's leading
analysis of law firm rates,
trends, and practices

Report Editor**Jennifer McIver**

Director, Legal Operations and Industry Insights
Wolters Kluwer ELM Solutions

Lead Data Analysts**Anand Kumar Pathinettam Padian**

Software and Data Engineer
Wolters Kluwer ELM Solutions

Farhan Shaikh

Data Scientist
Wolters Kluwer ELM Solutions

ELM Solutions Creative**David Andrews**

Senior Graphic Designer
Wolters Kluwer ELM Solutions

Contributing Analysts and Authors**Haemi Jung**

Strategic Business Intelligence Manager
Wolters Kluwer ELM Solutions

Manish Sharma

Director, Business Analysis
Wolters Kluwer ELM Solutions

Karen Sekley-Dandrea

Director, Marketing
Wolters Kluwer ELM Solutions

Mat Greener

Project & Program Management Director
Wolters Kluwer ELM Solutions

Executive Sponsor**Brian Jorgenson**

Vice President, Product Management
Wolters Kluwer ELM Solutions

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Wolters Kluwer ELM Solutions
2929 Allen Pkwy Ste 3300
Houston, TX 77019 United States
ATTN: Marketing
ELMSolutionsSales@wolterskluwer.com

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A Letter to Our Readers

Welcome to the latest edition of the Real Rate Report®, the legal industry's most trusted benchmark for legal billing rates.

Since 2010, the Real Rate Report has helped legal departments and law firms make smarter decisions about pricing, resourcing, and vendor management. That hasn't changed. What has changed is how we deliver those insights.

This year, the Real Rate Report is powered by LegalVIEW® DynamicInsights—our new digital-first platform that brings the same trusted LegalVIEW data to life in a more interactive, flexible, and timely way. Leveraging Wolters Kluwer's LegalVIEW database, with over \$200B in anonymized, approved, invoice data, LegalVIEW DynamicInsights offers dynamic filters, quarterly updates, and calendar-year alignment to help users tailor benchmarks to their unique needs, on demand.

The Real Rate Report remains a vital snapshot of the market, and we know many of you rely on it as a reference tool. But DynamicInsights goes further. It enables deeper exploration of rate trends by role, experience, geography, practice area, industry, and more. Whether you're negotiating rates, evaluating law firm performance, or planning budgets, DynamicInsights gives you the agility and precision today's legal environment demands.

As always, we welcome your feedback and thank our data contributors for making this work possible. We're proud to be your partner in legal analytics and look forward to continuing to deliver insights that drive better business outcomes.

Sincerely,



Brian Jorgenson

Vice President, Product Management
Wolters Kluwer ELM Solutions

Real Rate Report Overview

The Real Rate Report is powered by LegalVIEW DynamicInsights, a web-based solution that delivers dynamic, invoice-backed insights through approved legal billing rates. It enables legal professionals to analyze rate trends by role, experience, industry, geography, practice area, and more using the world's largest repository of legal spend data.

DynamicInsights leverages the same trusted LegalVIEW database that has powered the Real Rate Report for years, now encompassing over \$200B+ in anonymized, approved legal invoice data. As with previous Real Rate Reports, our data is sourced from corporations' and law firms' e-billing and time management solutions. We have included lawyer and paralegal rate data filtered by specific practice and sub-practice areas, metropolitan areas, and types of matters. This level of granularity gives legal departments and law firms the precision they need to identify areas of opportunity.

What's different with DynamicInsights?

Same source, same methodology: DynamicInsights uses the same rigorous data validation and methodology as the Real Rate Report.

- **Enhanced flexibility:** With dynamic filters, DynamicInsights enables users to tailor benchmarks to their unique needs and on demand.
- **Full year data:** DynamicInsights now aligns to a calendar year view—January through December—replacing the previous July-to-June format used in the Real Rate Report, reducing confusion and improving consistency across reporting periods.
- **More up to date:** Unlike the annual and static Real Rate Report, DynamicInsights is refreshed quarterly, offering more timely insights.
- **Digital-first access:** Delivered via a secure online interface, users can interact with the data, bookmark views, and share insights in real time.

DynamicInsights provides the same level of credibility and analytical power long trusted in the Real Rate Report with more agility and transparency for today's legal environment.

2025 Real Rate Report use considerations

- Examines law firm rates over time
- Identifies rates by location, experience, firm size, areas of expertise, industry, and timekeeper role (i.e., partner, associate, and paralegal)
- Itemizes variables that drive rates up or down

All the analyses included in DynamicInsights and this report are derived from the actual rates charged by law firm professionals as recorded on invoices submitted and approved for payment.

Examining real, approved rate information, along with the ranges of those rates and their changes over time, highlights the role these variables play in driving aggregate legal cost and income. The analyses can energize questions for both corporate clients and law firm principals.

Legal departments might ask whether they are paying the right amount for different types of legal services, while law firm principals might ask whether they are charging the right amount for legal services and whether to modify their pricing approach.

Examples of data to consider when reviewing rates:

- **Industry** – Compare spend and rate trends across various industries
- **Practice area** – Analyze cost variations in different legal practice areas
- **Detailed practice area** – Drill down into niche legal specialties for precise benchmarking
- **Am Law** – Benchmark against top-ranked law firms for competitive rate analysis
- **City** – Understand rate trends in specific metropolitan areas
- **Country** – Gain a global perspective on legal costs and spend management
- **Role** – Assess legal spend distribution across different law firm roles

Real Rate Report Overview

Understanding key statistical terms

To help interpret the legal rate data presented in DynamicInsights and this report, it's important to understand the statistical measures used. Below are definitions of the core metrics:

- **Mean (average):** The sum of all rate values divided by the total number of values added. It provides a general sense of the central tendency of the rates but can be influenced by extreme values (outliers).
- **Median:** The middle value when all rates are arranged in ascending order. If there is an even number of rates being analyzed, the median is the average of the two middle rates. It is a robust measure of central tendency of rates that is less affected by outliers.
- **First quartile (Q1):** The value below which 25% of the rates fall. It marks the lower boundary of the middle 50% of the rates and helps identify the lower range of typical values.
- **Third quartile (Q3):** The value below which 75% of the rates fall. It marks the upper boundary of the middle 50% of the rates and helps identify the upper range of typical values.
- **n:** The number of unique timekeepers contributing to the data.

These metrics are used to provide a more nuanced view of legal rates, helping users identify trends, outliers, and benchmarks across various dimensions.

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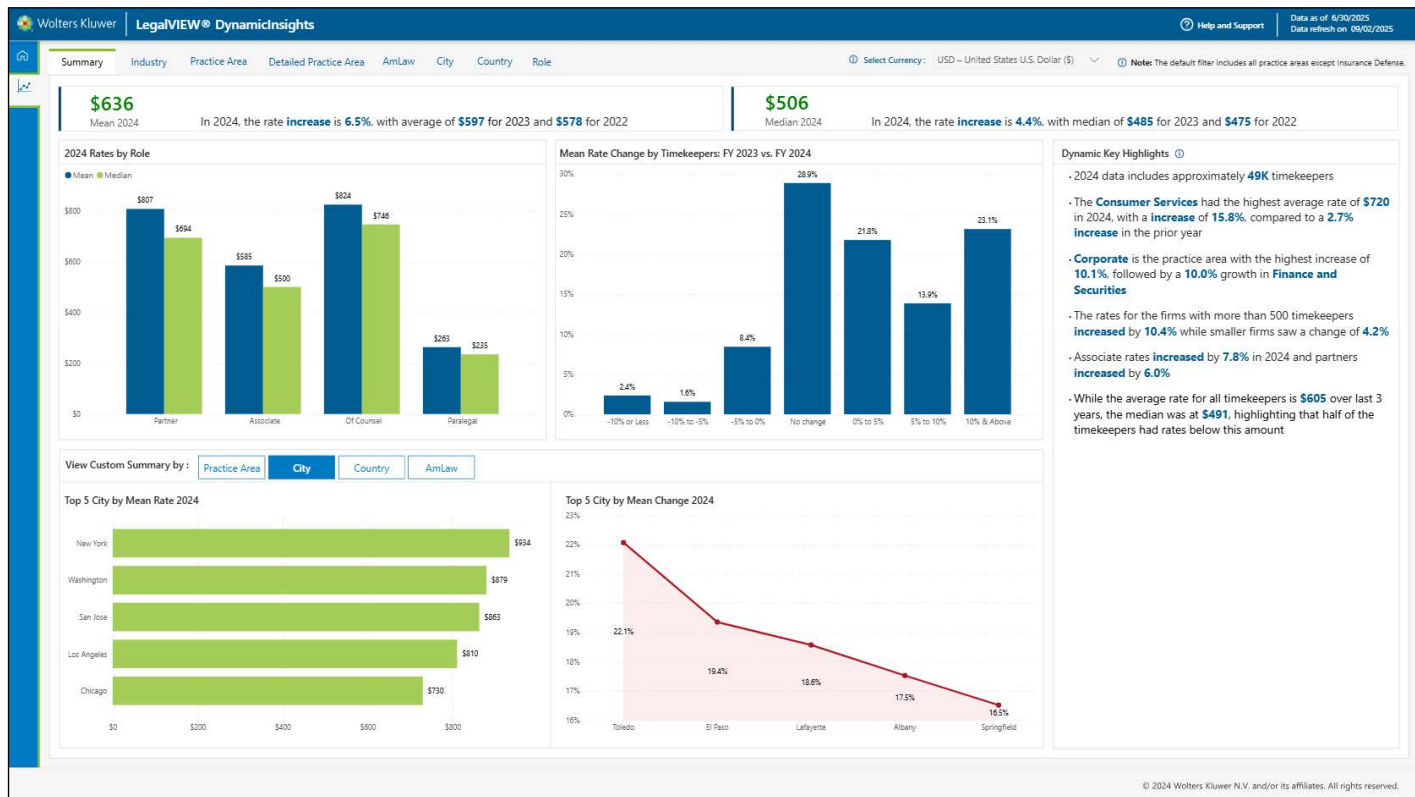
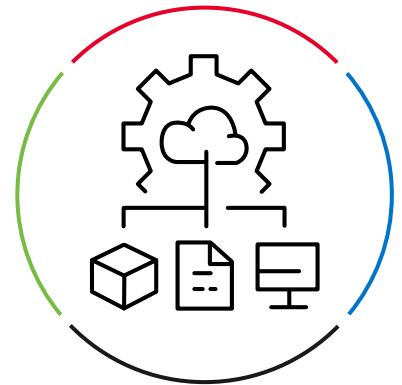


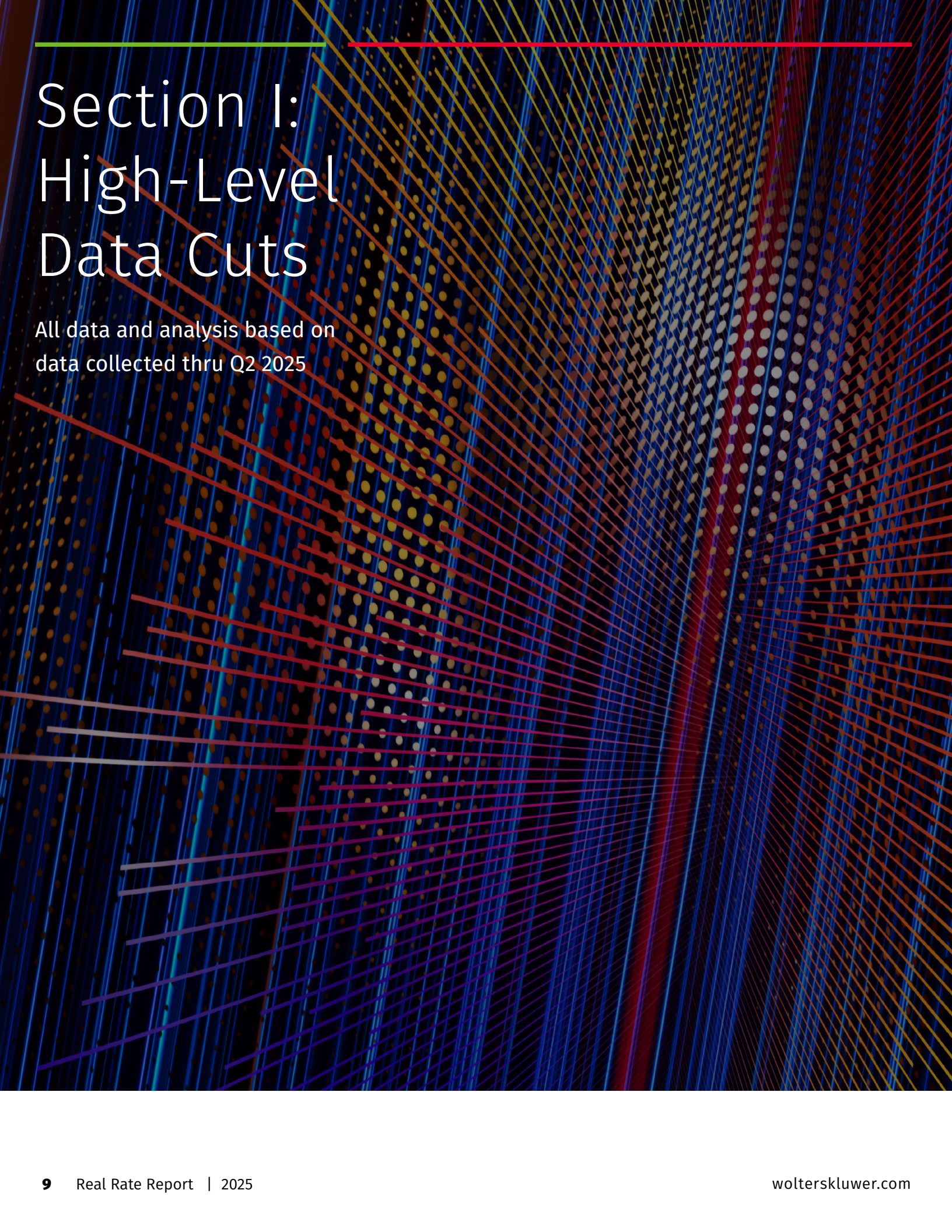
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- **Enhanced Transparency & Collaboration:** Strengthens law firm-client relationships through data-driven transparency and benchmarking.
- **Insight-Driven Decision Making:** Enables analysis across key dimensions to support strategic negotiations and financial optimization.





Section I: High-Level Data Cuts

All data and analysis based on
data collected thru Q2 2025

Section I: High-Level Data Cuts

Cities

By Matter Type

2025 Real Rates for Associate and Partner

Trend Analysis - Mean

City	Matter Type	Role	n	First Quartile	Median	Third Quartile	2025	2024	2023
San Francisco CA	Litigation	Partner	106	\$400	\$718	\$1,378	\$908	\$819	\$803
		Associate	80	\$385	\$666	\$875	\$683	\$652	\$614
	Non-Litigation	Partner	132	\$445	\$689	\$1,249	\$856	\$868	\$788
		Associate	97	\$335	\$550	\$922	\$640	\$664	\$593
San Jose CA	Litigation	Partner	23	\$650	\$800	\$1,250	\$998	\$1,024	\$1,011
		Associate	20	\$625	\$815	\$1,030	\$852	\$802	\$721
	Non-Litigation	Partner	33	\$745	\$950	\$1,266	\$1,033	\$1,104	\$1,108
		Associate	27	\$527	\$610	\$966	\$718	\$709	\$701
Seattle WA	Litigation	Partner	57	\$520	\$902	\$925	\$790	\$719	\$628
		Associate	29	\$425	\$653	\$700	\$586	\$518	\$475
	Non-Litigation	Partner	119	\$402	\$615	\$925	\$694	\$635	\$652
		Associate	79	\$307	\$445	\$676	\$496	\$484	\$467



Section II: Industry Analysis

All data and analysis based on
data collected thru Q2 2025

Section II: Industry Analysis

Consumer Services

By Detailed Practice Area and
Matter Type

2025 - Real Rates for Associate and Partner

Trend Analysis - Mean

Practice Area	Matter Type	Role	n	First Quartile	Median	Third Quartile	2025	2024	2023
Employment and Labor: Discrimination, Retaliation and Harassment / EEO	Litigation	Partner	27	\$393	\$495	\$613	\$509	\$463	\$436
		Associate	19	\$400	\$475	\$493	\$437	\$387	\$370
Employment and Labor: Other	Litigation	Partner	24	\$564	\$692	\$1,252	\$956	\$782	\$683
		Associate	14	\$384	\$469	\$564	\$553	\$484	\$458
	Non-Litigation	Partner	25	\$450	\$574	\$695	\$579	\$573	\$548
		Associate	25	\$397	\$450	\$525	\$465	\$472	\$456
Intellectual Property: Patents	Non-Litigation	Partner	41	\$350	\$595	\$691	\$605	\$652	\$634
		Associate	51	\$208	\$373	\$517	\$382	\$378	\$389
Real Estate: Leasing	Non-Litigation	Partner	17	\$410	\$539	\$865	\$616	\$664	\$667
		Associate	10	\$278	\$404	\$617	\$482	\$444	\$478
Real Estate: Other	Non-Litigation	Partner	58	\$480	\$626	\$940	\$694	\$612	\$540
		Associate	39	\$320	\$460	\$733	\$503	\$468	\$415

EXHIBIT 2

Free Newsletter Sign Up

Business & Practice

Big Law Rates Topping \$2,000 Leave Value ‘In Eye of Beholder’

By Roy Strom

Column

June 9, 2022, 2:30 AM

Welcome back to the Big Law Business column on the changing legal marketplace written by me, Roy Strom. Today, we look at a new threshold for lawyers' billing rates and why it's so difficult to put a price on high-powered attorneys. Sign up to receive this column in your inbox on Thursday mornings. Programming note: Big Law Business will be off next week.

Some of the nation's top law firms are charging more than \$2,000 an hour, setting a new pinnacle after a two-year burst in demand.

Partners at Hogan Lovells and Latham & Watkins have crossed the threshold, according to court documents in bankruptcy cases filed within the past year.

Other firms came close to the mark, billing more than \$1,900, according to the documents. They include Kirkland & Ellis, Simpson Thacher & Bartlett, Boies Schiller Flexner, and Sidley Austin.

Simpson Thacher & Bartlett litigator Bryce Friedman, who helps big-name clients out of jams, especially when they're accused of fraud, charges \$1,965 every 60 minutes, according to a court document.

In need of a former acting US Solicitor General? Hogan Lovells partner Neal Katyal bills time at \$2,465 an hour. Want to hire famous litigator David Boies? That'll cost \$1,950 an hour (at least). Reuters was first to report their fees.

Eye-watering rates are nothing new for Big Law firms, which typically ask clients to pay higher prices at least once a year, regardless of broader market conditions.

"Value is in the eye of the beholder," said John O'Connor, a San Francisco-based expert on legal fees. "The perceived value of a good lawyer can reach into the multi-billions of dollars."

Kirkland & Ellis declined to comment on its billing rates. None of the other firms responded to requests to comment.

Charge It Up

Big Law firms are crossing the \$2,000-an-hour threshold after two years of surging rates driven by an increase in demand for lawyers.

Firm	Highest Billing Rate
Hogan Lovells	\$2,465
Latham & Watkins	\$2,075
Kirkland & Ellis	\$1,995
Simpson Thacher & Bartlett	\$1,965
Boies Schiller Flexner	\$1,950
Sidley Austin	\$1,900

Source: Court documents

Bloomberg Law

Law firms have been more successful raising rates than most other businesses over the past 15 years.

Law firm rates rose by roughly 40 percent from 2007 to 2020, or just short of 3 percent per year, Thomson Reuters Peer Monitor data show. US inflation rose by about 28% during that time.

The 100 largest law firms in the past two years achieved their largest rate increases in more than a decade, Peer Monitor says. The rates surged more than 6% in 2020 and grew another 5.6% through November of last year. Neither level had been breached since 2008.

The price hikes occurred during a once-in-a-decade surge in demand for law services, which propelled profits at firms to new levels. Fourteen law firms reported average profits per equity partner in 2021 over \$5 million, according to data from The American Lawyer. That was up from six the previous year.

The highest-performing firms, where lawyers charge the highest prices, have outperformed their smaller peers. Firms with leading practices in markets such as mergers and acquisitions, capital markets, and real estate were forced to turn away work at some points during the pandemic-fueled surge.

Firms receive relatively tepid pushback from their giant corporate clients, especially when advising on bet-the-company litigation or billion-dollar deals.

The portion of bills law firms collected—a sign of how willingly clients pay full-freight—rose during the previous two years after drifting lower following the Great Financial Crisis. Collection rates last year breached 90% for the first time since 2009, Peer Monitor data show.

Professional rules prohibit lawyers from charging “unconscionable” or “unreasonable” rates. But that doesn’t preclude clients from paying any price they perceive as valuable, said Jacqueline Vinaccia, a San Diego-based lawyer who testifies on lawyer fee disputes.

Lawyers’ fees are usually only contested when they will be paid by a third party.

That happened recently with Hogan Lovells’ Katyal, whose nearly \$2,500 an hour fee was contested in May by a US trustee overseeing a bankruptcy case involving a Johnson & Johnson unit facing claims its talc-based powders caused cancer.

The trustee, who protects the financial interests of bankruptcy estates, argued Katyal’s fee was more than \$1,000 an hour higher than rates charged by lawyers in the same case at Jones Day and Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom.

A hearing on the trustee’s objection is scheduled for next week. Hogan Lovells did not respond to a request for comment on the objection.

Vinaccia said the firm’s options will be to reduce its fee, withdraw from the case, or argue the levy is reasonable, most likely based on Katyal’s extensive experience arguing appeals.

Still, the hourly rate shows just how valuable the most prestigious lawyers’ time can be—even compared to their highly compensated competitors.

“If the argument is that Jones Day and Skadden Arps are less expensive, then you’re already talking about the cream of the crop, the top-of-the-barrel law firms,” Vinaccia said. “I can’t imagine a case in which I might argue those two firms are more reasonable than the rates I’m dealing with.”

Worth Your Time

On Cravath: Cravath Swaine & Moore is heading to Washington, opening its first new office since 1973 by hiring former heads of the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission and Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. Meghan Tribe reports the move comes as Big Law firms are looking to add federal government expertise as clients face more regulatory scrutiny.

On Big Law Promotions: It’s rare that associates get promotions to partner in June, but Camille Vasquez is now a Brown Rudnick partner after she shot to fame representing Johnny Depp in his defamation trial against ex-wife Amber Heard.

On Working From Home: I spoke this week with Quinn Emanuel’s John Quinn about why he thinks law firm life is never going back to the office-first culture that was upset by the pandemic. Listen to the podcast [here](#).



That's it for this week! Thanks for reading and please send me your thoughts, critiques, and tips.

To contact the reporter on this story: Roy Strom in Chicago at rstrom@bloomberglaw.com

To contact the editors responsible for this story: Chris Opfer at copfer@bloomberglaw.com; John Hughes at jhughes@bloombergindustry.com

Documents

[Trustee's Objection](#)

Related Articles

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Aug. 12, 2021, 3:00 AM

Law Firms

Simpson Thacher
Hogan Lovells
Jones Day
Skadden
Sidley Austin
Quinn Emanuel
Cravath Swaine & Moore
Latham & Watkins
Kirkland & Ellis
Boies Schiller Flexner

Topics

expert fees
compensation of bankruptcy attorney
acquisitions
U.S. trustees
financial markets
client-paid legal fees
data breaches

Companies

Johnson & Johnson
Thomson Reuters Corp

EXHIBIT 3

Wilshire Law Firm, PLC
Transaction Detail by Account
All Transactions

Accrual Basis

<u>Type</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Num</u>	<u>Memo</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Balance</u>
Mediation Fees						
	6/19/2025	666815	Judicate West	50% Mediation Fee	\$9,450.00	\$9,450.00
Total MEDIATION FEES					\$9,450.00	9,450.00
Consultant Fees						
	09/18/2025	16244	Berger Consulting Group LLC	16244-Vezina Industries Inc. (Esparza-Valdez)-7.50 hrs of work	\$5,062.50	\$5,062.50
Total CONSULTANT FEES					\$5,062.50	5,062.50
Filing Fees						
	01/23/2026	CC013126TA-1925	Filing Fee - One Legal LLC	Amended Complaint	\$22.20	22.20
	02/02/2026	CC022826TA-0406	Filing Fee - One Legal LLC	Stip and Order	\$43.94	66.14
	04/15/2026	CC043026TA-1353	Filing Fee - One Legal LLC	Declaration and Order	\$85.34	151.48
	05/04/2026	CC053126TA-0284	Filing Fee - One Legal LLC	CMCS	\$22.20	173.68
	06/10/2026	CC063026TA-1008	Filing Fee - One Legal LLC	Notice	\$22.20	195.88
	07/08/2025	CC073125TA-1382	Filing Fee - One Legal LLC	Notice	\$21.11	216.99
	08/15/2025	CC083125TA-1635	Filing Fee - One Legal LLC	Jury Fees	\$177.02	394.01
	08/25/2025	CC083125TA-3002	Filing Fee - One Legal LLC	Notice	\$21.11	415.12
	11/04/2025	CC113025TA-0583	Filing Fee - One Legal LLC	CMCS	\$21.11	436.23
	12/23/2025	CC123125TA-2363	Filing Fee - One Legal LLC	Stip and Order	\$43.94	480.17
	05/15/2025	90937	Filing Fee - Valpro Attorney Services, LLC	POS	\$45.00	525.17
	05/01/2025	25277707	Filing Fee - One Legal LLC	Complaint	\$1,503.78	2,028.95
	04/17/2025		Filing Fee - Department of Industrial Relations	PAGA Notice	\$75.00	2,103.95
	05/14/2025	90749	Service Fee - Valpro Attorney Services, LLC	Serve Vezina	\$203.45	2,307.40
Total FILING FEES					\$2,307.40	2,307.40
TOTAL					\$16,819.90	16,819.90