## In the Matter of the Investigation of: PRIVATE PARTY ENFORCERS OF PROPOSITION 65

## PROCEEDINGS - Vol. 1 November 9, 2015



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## BEFORE THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

STATE OF CALIFORNIA

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In the Matter of the

Investigation of:

PRIVATE PARTY ENFORCERS OF

PROPOSITION 65

## REPORTER'S TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Oakland, California

November 9, 2015

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Reported by: Natalie Y. Botelho, CSR No. 9897

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1	APPEARANCES
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3	FOR STATE OF CALIFORNIA, DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE:
4	OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
5	BY: HARRISON M. POLLAK, DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL
6	and SUSAN FIERING,
7	SUPERVISING DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL 1515 Clay Street, 20th Floor
8	Oakland, CA 94612-0500 (510)622-2183
9	harrison.pollak@doj.ca.gov
10	ALSO PRESENT:
11	(See attendance sign-in sheet attached.)
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1	OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA
2	NOVEMBER 9, 2015 - 2:03 P.M.
3	* * * * * *
4	
5	PROCEEDINGS
6	MR. POLLAK: The Department of Justice, Office
7	of the Attorney General, has proposed to amend Title 11,
8	Division 4 of the California Code of Regulations
9	concerning Proposition 65 enforcement actions brought by
10	private parties. The amendments would affect settlement
11	terms, penalty amounts, and attorneys' fees in civil
12	actions filed by private persons in the public interest
13	pursuant to the Safe Drinking Water and Toxic
14	Enforcement Act of 1986, commonly known as Proposition
15	65.
16	A Notice of Proposed Rule Making was published
17	in the California Regulatory Notice Register on
18	September 25th, 2015, in Register No. 39-Z, starting at
19	page 1679. The noticed and related rule-making
20	documents were posted on the Attorney General's Web site
21	the same day and mailed to approximately 100 interested
22	parties.
23	On October 13th, the AG's Office received a
24	written request from Chris Heptinstall, the executive
25	director of the Environmental Research Center, Inc.

dated October 8th, 2015. It was a request to hold a 1 2 public hearing regarding the regulatory proposal. The 3 request was made pursuant to Government Code Section 11346.8, Subdivision (a). 4 5 On October 22nd, 2015, the Attorney General's Office announced it would hold this public hearing. We 6 7 posted on our Web site a notice with the time, date, and 8 place of hearing, and we mailed it to the same 100 or so 9 interested parties that received the Notice of Proposed 10 Rule Making. 11 During today's hearing, anybody who wishes to 12 speak may do so. We ask that you come up to the podium, 13 speak into the microphone so that all of us can hear 14 you, and that before you start in on your comments, you 15 introduce yourself, spell your name if needed, and your 16 affiliation. Which reminds me, I didn't introduce 17 myself, although there were only two of you out there 18 when I started. 19 But I am Harrison Pollak, Deputy Attorney 20 General in the Attorney General's Office here. 21 P-O-L-L-A-K. And with me today is Supervising Deputy 2.2 Attorney General Sue Fiering, who I asked to come so she 23 could open the door as needed. 24 So as you can see, the hearing is being 25 transcribed by a certified court reporter. The

transcript will be included in the Minister of Record 1 for the rule making. Today's hearing will end when all 2 3 business is conducted or at 5:00 p.m., whichever is 4 sooner. 5 I should also say that -- oh, I have it back here, so I will say it. As with written comments, we 6 7 will consider all relevant matter presented to us during 8 today's hearing before the completion of the rule 9 making. So while we might not and probably won't respond here at the hearing, we will respond to all of 10 11 the comments at some point during the rule making or when we issue our final rule. 12 13 Does anyone have any questions? 14 (Pause.) 15 MR. POLLAK: Okay. And can I get just a show 16 of hands -- you won't be committed to this, but just how 17 many of you intend to come up and make comments? 18 (Pause.) 19 MR. POLLAK: All right. I've seen about two 20 and a half, three. Okay. So I'm not going to place a 21 time limit on comments, but I would ask that you try to 2.2 keep your comments succinct and stick to the point. And 23 also remind you that you can -- some of you have 24 submitted written comments. The close of the written 25 comment period is today at the close of business.

So with that, I will ask our first commenter 1 2 to come to the podium, and proceed. 3 COMMENT BY MATTHEW MACLEAR 4 MR. MACLEAR: Good afternoon. My name is 5 Matthew Maclear. I'm here on behalf of Equa Terra Aeris Law Group and on behalf of interested parties, including 6 7 Environmental Research Center. I'd like to tell the 8 Attorney General's Office thank you for the opportunity 9 to provide oral comments on our proposed Title 11 rule 10 making. 11 While ATA and its clients applaud the goals of 12 transparency and increasing protection of penalties 13 going to OEHHA, and accountability, there are several questions that are raised by these proposed regulations, 14 15 including some of the mechanisms, the standards, the 16 necessities, the assumptions, and the effects of the 17 proposed amended regulations. 18 Starting with the elimination of the 19 additional settlement payments and out-of-court 20 settlements, my clients believe that out-of-court 21 settlements with additional settlement payments, with 2.2 proper Attorney General oversight, could achieve the 23 same public health protected purposes and benefits of 24 Prop 65 in-court settlements. 25 Eliminating additional settlement payments and

out-of-court settlements will increase the costs of 1 2 settlement and litigation to both parties, delay 3 protective and publicly beneficial remedies reached through these settlements, deny the benefits conferred 4 5 on the public and the companies through effective and efficient out-of-court settlements. It increases the 6 7 burden and expense on the enforcers in the companies. 8 It will reduce the incentive to settle, which is a 9 stated goal of the courts of the state of California, 10 and it will overload the already overburdened courts 11 with ministerial acts which could be accomplished 12 through greater AG oversight.

13 As a proposal, we would like the Attorney General's Office to consider providing for similar 14 15 requirements for out-of-court settlements as stated for 16 in-court settlements, involve the Attorney General's Office earlier in the settlement process to provide the 17 assurances that they seek as indicated in the 18 19 regulations, and that would thereby allow out-of-court 20 settlements to include additional settlement payments, 21 albeit with greater AG oversight.

With regard to the attorneys' fees section, the public benefit, the proposed regulations point out that it's related to products. Not all the warning cases that are brought under 25249.6 are about products,

and so we believe the focus should be on the level of 1 2 chemical in question, not simply on the products. 3 With regard to the reformulation standards proposed, the proposed language increases the likelihood 4 5 of delays of public benefits, increases the cost, and will delay settlement and increase the likelihood of 6 7 trials on the centrally contested issues that could be 8 construed as admissions. 9 Reformulation -- oh, pardon me. Strike that. 10 With regard to specifically additional settlement 11 payments, the proposed new increased nexus requirements 12 will have many unintended costly consequences. First 13 and foremost, discounting future private -- or future Prop 65 enforcement and reduction of exposure to Prop 65 14 15 listed chemicals, it shouldn't -- is not warranted. 16 Those goals provide substantial public benefits by identifying potential violators, reducing 17 18 chemical exposures, and enhancing consumer choice based 19 on the warrants. The additional requirements impose 20 specific accounting rules such that it could be 21 construed as requiring separate accounts for each 2.2 different case. It is -- could -- it would be unwieldy 23 and is unnecessary, the level of detail that's being 24 required. It puts form over substance and would focus 25 on creating checklists for submission and approval as

1	opposed to the substantive improvements that are gained
2	through Prop 65 enforcement. And simply requiring those
3	things to be available is more appropriate than having
4	to include them in every settlement.
5	One last point is or second-to-last point
6	is the economic interest disclosure that's referenced by
7	incorporation of the Government Code I believe it's
8	18703 to 18703.5 we think is an overreach. It
9	doesn't most of that applies to public officials and
10	shouldn't apply to private enforcers. It's not
11	necessary to extend it to counsel as proposed. Counsel
12	are not parties to these agreements. They're doing the
13	work for their clients, and we believe that the
14	inclusion of this term invades the counsel and clients'
15	free speech and statutory rights and privileges and
16	should not be permitted. And we would just like to
17	point out, there could be greater clarity with the
18	application of these new regulations to Prop 65
19	discharge cases, as well.
20	Thank you.
21	COMMENT BY JAMES WHEATON
22	MR. WHEATON: Good afternoon. Jim Wheaton
23	with the Environmental Law Foundation. W-H-E-A-T-O-N.
24	Thank you, Mr. Pollak and Ms. Fiering for the chance to
25	converse with you about the new post rules. As I

1	understand it, these are not actually regulations
2	binding on the parties, but rather publications or
3	guidelines the Attorney General intends to use in their
4	own review of settlements and then to inform the courts.
5	And perhaps over time the courts will begin to adopt
6	some of these, as well, and we welcome that effort.
7	On both sides of the regulations, both with
8	regard to the substantive decisions about how money is
9	distributed for a Prop 65 case, as well as the review of
10	attorneys' fees and ensuring that there is indeed a true
11	public benefit in order to as the foundation for any
12	kind of award of attorneys' fees under CCP 1021.5, I
13	want to let you know that the Environmental Law
14	Foundation, oh, many, many years ago would accept funds
15	itself to be held used in a manner of a trust for
16	various purposes to advance the interests of the
17	statute, but and even did that in cases that we
18	litigated with the Attorney General's Office, like the
19	leaded faucet case. We discontinued doing that at least
20	a dozen years ago and do not ourselves take any funds
21	directly from the defendant as a settlement for a Prop
22	65 case. And indeed, I'm not sure that we ever took
23	money directly under Prop 65, because I know we
24	discontinued it when there was an amendment to the
25	Business and Professions Code and a statutory initiative
1	

1	that changed the way the Business and Professions Code
2	could be litigated, and that had been our principal
3	vehicle for using funds to advance the public purposes.
4	When that was passed in 2004, we just said, "We will do
5	it no longer," and we have not now for well over ten
6	years and probably close to a dozen or more. So that
7	part doesn't effect us particularly. And on the
8	attorneys' fees, certainly documenting fees and the
9	basis for any attorney fee claim has been standard
10	procedure forever.
11	My only caution on that side is please don't
12	make the burden of documentation and justification as to
13	every jot and tittle of time so burdensome it would
14	create in effect a second litigation over attorneys'
15	fees, which I know the Attorney General's Office has, at
16	least since the time of Attorney General Van de Kamp,
17	has always said is at least a meritorious kind of
18	litigation, not just litigation over fees. So let's be
19	sure to streamline that and keep it accountable, but not
20	create an administrative burden for your office, for us,
21	or for the courts.
22	The only other thing I'd mention on the
23	substantive side, with regard to the practice of having
24	payments in lieu of penalties and having those funds
25	then directed anywhere other than the statutory

1	direction of 75 percent to the State and 25 percent to
2	the plaintiff, is a perhaps unintended potential
3	consequence. And for this I draw on some experience
4	over in the class action side, consumer class actions.
5	And the issue I want to raise is the potential
6	involvement, or rather, the approval of the defendant in
7	the action in where the money goes and to what purposes
8	it is put.

9 And I'm going to specifically reference cases 10 that were done several years ago now involving bank 11 credit card fees and charges and practices, sometimes over privacy, sometimes over charges, sometimes --12 13 whatever it was, consumer credit cards. And as those 14 neared settlement, the question arose of what to do with 15 any funds that were being disgorged. Difficult 16 sometimes to get that money back to the individual credit card holders in very, very small amounts. And so 17 they used various cy pres remedies to direct the funds 18 other than directly back to the consumers. 19

And there is actually a statute in the Code of Civil Procedure that unclaimed funds from class actions have to go to certain designated places, legal services, to consumer protection that's related -- and the word "Nexus" is used, I believe, in the statute, or perhaps just says, "related to the nature of the transgression

1	alleged." And yet where the defendants had control over
2	where the funds were going to be directed, we saw over
3	and over again cases in which the credit card companies
4	or banks were insisting that the funds go to their
5	preferred places, and those often had nothing to do with
6	consumer protection. We saw them going to places like
7	the Boys Clubs, Chambers of Commerce, and other favored
8	charities of the defendant or defendants.
9	In one case someone did a study and they
10	tracked I don't want to name the bank because I don't
11	want to get it wrong, but the settlement with the bank
12	and the list of places the cy pres funds were going
13	matched the previous year's charitable donations of the
14	bank. That kind of thing, of course, does nothing to
15	advance anyone's interest.
16	So the key thing is to ensure that in writing
17	your guidelines, you make it clear that the approval of
18	the defendant in the action is not required for
19	distributing the funds. And I raise that because some
20	of the Prop 65 in-lieu payments have been used for grant
21	purposes, for instance, where the funds will be
22	distributed later, where by definition the defendant has
23	no role. By frontloading the decision of where the
24	money goes into the settlement itself for approval by

25 the judge, a practice we don't take issue with, it

1	raises the specter that the defendant's approval for
2	distribution of money will always be required, and that
3	gives them leverage that it should not have.
4	So perhaps some language in the guidelines to
5	the effect of, "The plaintiff's choice of where it shall
6	go shall be justified," or perhaps even prefatory
7	language specifically saying, "The defendant's approval
8	is not required." But so I could see, for instance, a
9	procedure by which a settlement fund was being
10	distributed, it was created in the settlement and
11	approved by the Court, with the approval, of course, of
12	both parties as to the amount.
13	And there might be a separate appendix or
14	separate pleading even describing the plaintiff's choice
15	of where the money would be distributed and their
16	justification for the Court's approval, but it was the
17	plaintiff alone, not the plaintiff and defendant
18	proposing that, to ensure there wasn't a kind of
19	self-dealing potential by the defendants in trying to
20	control the distribution of the funds.
21	With that, I have nothing further to add, and
22	I thank you for the opportunity.
23	MR. POLLAK: So for those this is Harrison
24	Pollak again. For those who just came in, we're taking
25	comments in no particular order. So if anybody wants to

1	speak, please step up, introduce yourself, and speak
2	away.
3	COMMENT BY RYAN HOFFMAN
4	MR. HOFFMAN: Hello. I am Ryan Hoffman. I am
5	here speaking on behalf of interested parties. And I
6	want to start out by, of course, thanking our hosts of
7	the Attorney General's Office for having us here to have
8	this conversation about how we should proceed in
9	amending these regulations.
10	A couple of a few comments on various
11	topics. First would be the proposed changes to Section
12	3203, striking the language setting forth the standard
13	for evaluating the propriety of payments in lieu of
14	penalties or additional settlement payments, as they're
15	now referred.
16	In general, Section 3203, the proposed changes
17	would strike the existing language and replace it with a
18	general comment that the plaintiff must demonstrate to
19	the satisfaction of the Court it is in the public
20	interest to offset the subject penalty. It appears that
21	language in the proposed Section 3204 is intended to
22	serve the same function as the language currently in
23	Section 3203, but this isn't expressly stated, and it's
24	also not made precisely clear which portions are
25	intended to serve as criteria to inform the Court, so I

think it would be useful to do something to clarify
 those particular points.

3 In regard to the recordkeeping requirements 4 proposed in Section 3204, we think that they are 5 somewhat excessive. In general, the level of specificity that is being proposed in the new Section 6 7 3204 would result in very time-intensive recordkeeping 8 activities, to the point where many private enforcers 9 would actually be forced to hire new staff simply to 10 keep up. It would require things like a log of 11 activities for each consent judgment as a method of 12 following deadlines for each, following up separately on 13 each activity, potentially creating separate bank 14 accounts for each consent judgment to make sure funds 15 can be directly tracked. This would be a really 16 tremendous expenditure of resources with little to no 17 perceptible benefit. The time and money that it would 18 take to comply would be better spent on enforcement 19 activities.

20 Perhaps more importantly, it would be, 21 frankly, impossible for a private enforcer to know in 22 advance how it needs to allocate money that it's 23 receiving through payments in lieu of penalties or 24 additional settlement payments such that it could be 25 stated precisely in consent judgments.

1	For example, if we were to say that a consent
2	judgment would allocate 50 percent of additional
3	settlement payments to new enforcement activities, such
4	as creating generating research and notices of
5	violations and 50 percent to existing litigation
6	activities, taking depositions, filing fees, expert
7	witnesses, and then sometime later down the line
8	encounter a situation where they needed far more money
9	to engage in litigation activities than they had
10	previously planned, they would then be locked into the
11	particular allocation that they had specified in the
12	earlier consent judgments, and this could affect the
13	enforcement activities.
14	Couple of comments on the economic interest

15 disclosure provision found in Section 3204, sub (b)(6)(B). First of all, it's a little bit unclear 16 exactly how the information that's drawn into this 17 18 section from other sections -- Code of Regulations 19 Section 18703, 18703.5 -- are to be applied to private 20 enforcers. For example, the Section 18703 describes criteria for determining whether or not an action 21 22 affecting an official's economic interest is permissible 23 by comparing its effect on the official's economic 24 interest with its effect on the interest of members of 25 the public in that official's jurisdiction, but there is no logical analogy or corollary to private enforcers or
their counsel. As a result, it's somewhat unclear why
18703 is being incorporated into this definition. At a
minimum, that should be clarified, and perhaps 18703
should be stricken from the proposed regulation
altogether.
A second concern regarding this provision

8 would be that the proposed definition of economic 9 interest is sufficiently general that determining 10 whether or not it applies could in some circumstances be 11 an unreasonable burden. A particular example would be 12 where a person involved in a settlement has invested in 13 a mutual fund. It would then be incumbent upon that 14 individual to investigate whether or not any company 15 that the mutual fund had invested in had any involvement 16 in the Proposition 65 settlement. This could be a very 17 expensive, time-consuming proposition that serves no 18 discernible public benefit. This portion of the 19 regulation should be clarified to limit the scope of the 20 economic interests that it is deemed to apply to.

21 I think that's all I will say for the moment.
22 Thank you.

23 MR. POLLAK: Anyone else have any more
24 comments? Speak now or forever hold your peace.
25 Actually, speak now or submit them in writing by

1	5:00 o'clock.
2	Okay. Well, then, we will consider this
3	public hearing closed. Thanks, everyone.
4	(Whereupon, the proceedings were concluded
5	at 2:37 p.m.)
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1	STATE OF CALIFORNIA )
2	) ss. COUNTY OF ALAMEDA )
3	I, the undersigned, a Certified Shorthand
4	Reporter in the State of California, hereby certify that
5	the foregoing proceedings were reported by me and were
6	thereafter transcribed under my direction into
7	typewriting, and that the foregoing is a full, complete,
8	and true record of said proceedings.
9	I further certify that I am not of counsel or
10	attorney for either or any of the parties in the
11	foregoing proceedings and caption named, nor in any way
12	interested in the outcome of the cause named in said
13	caption.
14	IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my
15	hand this 16th day of November, 2015.
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17	NATALIE Y. BOWELHO CSR NO. 9897
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