



PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

**TAYLOR & RING OBTAINS \$14 MILLION SETTLEMENT FOR TWO WOMEN
SEXUALLY ABUSED BY MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER**

-- Settlement marks record payout by a school district in sexual abuse case --

MORAGA, CA – [Taylor & Ring](#), a Los Angeles-based trial law firm handling personal injury, wrongful death and sexual assault matters, obtained a \$14 million settlement against the Moraga School District, retired Superintendent John Cooley, retired Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School Principal William Walters and retired Assistant Principal Paul Simonin for the repeated inaction regarding allegations of sexual misconduct by a teacher which led to prolonged sexual abuse. The plaintiffs (“Jane Doe 1” and “Jane Doe 2”) claimed they were sexually abused more than 50 times each by their science teacher, Daniel Witters, at Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School in the mid-1990s. Each settlement marks the largest settlement in the country by a public school district to a victim of molestation.

In January 2013, Taylor & Ring filed a lawsuit on behalf of the plaintiffs alleging negligence, fraud and other charges committed by the defendants to purposefully conceal Mr. Witters’ troubled past and bury the numerous sexual abuse complaints from students and parents. The lawsuit pointed to several instances where school officials were made aware of Mr. Witters’ behavior, but no action was taken, and in fact, the district engaged in a careful scheme to deter any attention from the entire ordeal.

“Moraga school officials went to unimaginable lengths to cover up Mr. Witters’ horrific behavior and hide information that could have saved the victims,” said [David M. Ring](#), a partner with Taylor & Ring who represented Jane Doe 1 and Jane Doe 2. “The district’s deliberate indifference to the safety of its students allowed Mr. Witters to molest these girls for a long time. They stole the life of each woman and no amount of money will ever change that or make it better.”

Background

Mr. Witters was hired by the Moraga School District in 1989 and began sexually abusing adolescent girls shortly after he was hired. He continued doing so until his death in 1996. He began sexually abusing Jane Doe 1 in 1994 when she was 14 years old by fondling her and having her provide oral sex. Jane Doe 1 entered high school the following year, but the abuse continued for several more years. In 1996, Mr. Witters began molesting Jane Doe 2. By late 1996, several girls came forward and reported Mr. Witters' harassing conduct to a new school administrator, who commenced an investigation. In the midst of the investigation, Jane Doe 1 came forward and revealed how she had been abused.

Mr. Witters soon learned that Jane Doe 1 came forward in the investigation. He then disappeared and days later committed suicide by driving his car off a cliff in Monterey. His body was found in the wreckage days later.

Once Mr. Witters was found dead, all investigations came to an end. School officials made public statements representing that they had never received any prior complaints about Mr. Witters' misconduct and that the school had acted promptly and swiftly to deal with the most recent complaints. Thereafter, the school district successfully covered up and concealed its knowledge of Witters' criminal conduct and its own misconduct for years. In 2013, having discovered the truth, Jane Doe 1 and 2 filed their lawsuit against the defendants. This settlement followed after one and one-half years of litigation.

Quote from the Lawyer for the Victims:

From David M. Ring, the attorney for the Plaintiffs: "The school district's conduct was egregious. The abuse of these two girls was 100% preventable, but district administrators intentionally chose to allow a known predator to continue harming young girls. The district almost got away with it. But justice finally prevailed."

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Taylor & Ring, a Los Angeles-based trial law firm, represents plaintiffs across California in personal injury, wrongful death and sexual assault matters.

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