

Taylor & Ring LLP

Taylor & Ring believe massive verdicts keep institutions from repeating hurtful errors.

By Eli Wolfe

MANHATTAN BEACH Cases involving sexual abuse of minors or police misconduct are among the most horrifying attorneys can encounter in their career. But for the founding partners of Taylor & Ring LLP, these matters are opportunities to fix broken institutions.

A recent example occurred on Jan. 31, when the firm obtained a \$5 million settlement against Big Oak Flat Groveland Unified School District and Paso Robles Joint Unified School

District for a client who was abused by a teacher who had been transferred to another school even after administrators had received serious complaints about his behavior.

According to partner David Ring, massive verdicts tend to have a ripple effect in other institutions, noting that school administrators — seized by fear that they aren't sufficiently protecting students — will institute new policies proactively to avoid a potentially devastating lawsuit.

"It's rare that we've sued the same school district twice," Ring said. "After the first time they get it. They change their policies, their rules, and they institute a lot of training."

Convincing a judge or a jury that institutional failure was at play in a case represents a significant hurdle in many of Taylor & Ring's matters, but especially those involving school districts. Partner John Taylor pointed out that jurors may naturally wonder why a school is being sued when only one individual is alleged to be at fault.

To change this mentality, Taylor said the Manhattan Beach-based firm has developed an expertise over the past 15 years in describing the various ways a school can be complicit by "passing the trash" or pressuring victims to not make their complaints public.

The other half of the job is giving jurors a better sense of the scope of the problem.

"It's not limited to one geographic area, one economic strata, or one demographic. It's in public schools across the state, across the county, across Southern California, and in private schools as well," Taylor noted.

Securing a favorable verdict or settlement in these matters also requires persuasive powers, which Taylor and Ring have an abundance of, according to attorneys who are familiar with the firm. Victor George, a Torrance-based plaintiffs' attorney, said Taylor in particular has a knack for putting people at ease and getting them to trust him.

"I'm certain jurors must really like him," George said. "He's an honest guy, really down-to-earth — people just enjoying being around him."



Alex Drecon / Special to Daily Journal

From left, partners John Taylor and David Ring in their Manhattan Beach office.

George added that the firm has a reputation for fearlessly pursuing police misconduct cases that other plaintiffs' firms are wary of tackling.

Retired judge Russell Bostrom, a mediator with Judicate West who has mediated roughly 15 or 20 cases involving Taylor & Ring, said that while he wouldn't necessarily call the partners charming, he acknowledged that they are personable and command a great deal of admiration from the defense bar.

"The defense community respects them and that's always significant because sometimes you have people on the plaintiffs' side who are very successful but not very well-liked or respected," Bostrom said.

Thom Peters, chief assistant city attorney for the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office, has a uniquely rounded perspective on Taylor and Ring, having known both of them from years ago when he worked as a plaintiffs' attorney. In more recent times, attorneys from his office have battled with the two partners in court over use of force complaints against the Los Angeles Police Department.

"Both John and David are impeccably prepared lawyers," Peters said. "I know of no firm that's more deserving of the outstanding reputation that they have earned than that firm."

While Taylor & Ring built its reputation by focusing on two specialized practices, both attorneys emphasized they are generalists who will potentially take any case that comes through their door, aside from time-intensive medical malpractice matters.

"I pick up a file every day and it's a different type of case than it was the day before," Ring said. "It keeps it alive and exciting."

Past matters have included a broad range of personal injury cases. But Ring, who was president of the Consumer Attorneys Association of Los Angeles in 2016, said he anticipated an explosion of lawsuits in the future stemming from social media issues.

"You see all these invasions of privacy, defamation, all this stuff that happens because of social media," he observed. Ring added that his firm is potentially well-positioned to take on these kinds of cases because it already caters to clients who are unsure whether their case has merit.

"People come to us and they'll say, 'I don't even know if this is a case, but something bad happened' ... and it doesn't necessarily fit into some perfect category," Ring said. "We're willing to take those on to fit them into a category or create a new category."

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