

HOME | TV | NEWS

CBS, Big Ticket Fire Back at Agent in 'Judge Judy' Lawsuit, Claim He Was Paid \$17 Million 'For Doing Nothing'



Ted Johnson
Senior Editor
@tedstew



APRIL 15, 2016 | 06:11PM PT

COURTESY OF CBS

Big Ticket Television and CBS said in a court filing that talent agency Rebel Entertainment Partners was paid \$17 million in package fees "for doing nothing" for the TV series "Judge Judy," and didn't even represent star Judy Sheindlin.

Rebel Entertainment Partners filed suit against Big Ticket and CBS last month, claiming that it has not received contractually obligated payments for "Judge Judy" since 2010, because the show is losing money due to Sheindlin's annual salary of as much as \$47 million. Rebel, led by Richard Lawrence, is a successor agency to Abrams-Rubaloff & Lawrence.

In their response to the complaint, CBS and Big Ticket claim that Lawrence pitched a Judge Judy project to syndicators, but did not disclose that he did not represent Sheindlin. He did represent the producers, Sandi Spreckman and Kaye Switzer, who had interested Sheindlin in doing a show.

According to the response, Big Ticket entered into a packaging agreement with Lawrence's agency ARL to pay 3% of the the final production budget of each episode and 5% of Big Ticket's "defined proceeds" from the project.

Their response claims that Lawrence "intended to conceal the fact that he did not actually represent Judge Sheindlin, and was motivated to conceal the true nature of the extent of his representation of the project as a 'package' in order to extract an unjustified commission for 'packaging services' from Big Ticket." CBS and Big Ticket contend that Lawrence and his agency continued to collect commissions long after Spreckman and Switzer were terminated.

"Judge Sheindlin, her producers and crew have worked for 20 years in producing a successful syndicated program," CBS and Big Ticket said. "Lawrence has never been on the set of the program in 20 years, nor has he had any communication with his talent."

Sheindlin renewed her deal with CBS in 2013 and signed an extension in 2015.

Rebel Entertainment Partners claimed in its suit, filed in Los Angeles Superior Court, that in "the six-month accounting period after Scheindlin's pay raise ... defendants reported net profits of negative \$3,195,217." The suit also claims that "in the six-month accounting period prior to Scheindlin's pay raise, the show reported net profits of \$3,572,195, of which 5% (\$178,609) was paid to Rebel."

The suit called Sheindlin's salary "grossly inconsistent with customary practice in the television industry."

Sheindlin is not named as a plaintiff in the suit, but last month she called the lawsuit "laughable."

Rebel, which is seeking undisclosed damages, claims that "Judge Judy" has grossed \$1.7 billion since it premiered in 1996, and that Rebel received regular payments for the show until 2010.

James Curry and Benjamin O. Aigboboh of Sheppard Mullin represented Big Ticket and CBS.

Attorneys Bryan Freedman and Jordan Sussman are representing Rebel. Freedman has represented Variety's parent company PMC in multiple legal matters.

The response to the lawsuit was first reported by Deadline Hollywood.

Update: Freedman had this response. "It does not surprise me at all that when you pay your chairman over 2 million dollars a year to be comatose and add no value to your company that you think 47 million dollars is insignificant for someone that can actually speak. If that is the pay standard, Richard Lawrence should have gotten a few billion dollars since without him, CBS would have no idea who Judy ever was. How about anyone that bought a CBS share come to my office and join a class action for CBS' continuing to retain a chairman who can't speak and then hid it from the shareholders. Corporate governance is a big issue in this case and they better prove Sumner added value. CBS knows all too well that I am privy to information that they just made relevant. Let's go, this is getting fun now!"