

Agents sue Innovative

Press, McConnell fighting legality of contracts

By [JANET SHPRINTZ](#)



Two agents at Santa Monica-based Innovative Artists Talent and Literary Agency sued the firm Monday, alleging they were forced to sign “illegal and unconscionable” employment contracts.

In their Los Angeles Superior Court lawsuit, Ben Press and [Michael McConnell](#) seek a court ruling that their employment contracts are illegal and unenforceable.

Press, who is represented by Marty Singer, alleges agency president Scott Harris requires agents to sign an employment contract that requires a seven-year commitment from the agent but allows for termination without cause on four-weeks notice, making the agent essentially an “at will” employee.

According to the lawsuit, Press signed a five-year contract in 2003 and was told a month later that the term had been unilaterally changed to seven years. Further impeding the ability to leave, the contract also includes a two-year noncompete clause and a requirement to pay 100% of all commissions if an agent accepts work from a former Innovative client.

Said Singer, “Ben Press is seeking a judicial determination that not just his, but all of Scott Harris’ contracts with his agents, are null. To our knowledge, no other agency has a contract like this.”

McConnell filed a similar complaint, also alleging violations of the California Unfair Business Practices Act and seeking a judicial declaration that the contract is unenforceable.

McConnell’s attorney, Bryan Freedman, said, “[Michael McConnell](#) has filed this lawsuit to vindicate himself and resolve a longstanding problem with Innovative, whose contract provisions are unconscionable and unmatched in the entertainment industry.”

Innovative did not return a call seeking comment.

Press and McConnell, who are still working at Innovative, count among their clients Isaiah Washington, Matthew Modine, Chevy Chase, Sean Astin, Cary Elwes, Lauren Holly, Gina Gershon, Lara Flynn Boyle and Damon Dash.



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