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## Consumer

### **Lawyers Sought Zero Fees in \$25M Trump U Deal**

By PERRY COOPER

**C**lass counsel chose not to seek fees in the Trump University \$25 million settlement, which won final approval last month (*Low v. Trump Univ. LLC*, 2017 BL 106772, C.C.S.D. Cal., No. 10-940, 3/31/17).

Class members will receive over 80 percent of what they paid for real estate seminars they say didn't deliver on advertised promises.

That's an "extraordinary amount of recovery," Judge Gonzalo P. Curiel wrote for the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California in approving the deal March 31.

The case became a flash point during the 2016 presidential election campaign as critics pointed to the allegations to raise questions of whether Donald Trump could be trusted.

Trump drew further attention to it as he accused the judge, born in East Chicago, Ind., and of Mexican descent, of being biased against him because of his pledge to build a wall between the U.S. and Mexico.

That publicity—the deal was reached 10 days after the election—helped drive up the participation rate to over half of the more than 6,000 former students. Tuition ranged from \$1,495 for a three-day seminar to \$35,000 for an "elite" package.

**Pro Bono.** Curiel commended class counsel for their unusual decision to represent the class pro bono.

"Instead of seeking compensation for fees and costs that they would otherwise be entitled to, class counsel have acted to allow maximum recovery to plaintiffs and class members," he said.

Two plaintiff's firms stood to gain over \$6 million, based on the common 25 percent benchmark for fees in consumer cases.

"This case was unprecedented in so many ways; it's only fitting that it ended with an unprecedented recovery for so many people," plaintiffs' counsel Rachel Jensen, partner at Robbins Geller in San Diego said in a statement.

"Our firm put the lives of the class members and the interests of our country before our fees, and for that I could not be prouder," she said.

Zeldes Haeggquist & Eck LLP and Robbins Geller Rudman & Dowd LLP represented the class.

O'Melveny & Myers LLP and Belkin Burden Wenig & Goldman LLP represented Trump.

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