

[◀ NEWS \(/ARTICLES\)](#)

Scan to receive
breaking news text
alerts.

Trending

**Former SPLC intelligence chief
Beirich charged in donor-fraud
case (/articles/393608)**

Aug. 12, 2026

**9th Circuit issues first-of-its-
kind ruling in international
arbitration dispute
(/articles/393632)**

Aug. 12, 2026

**Preparing clients for mediation:
Meet them where they are
(/articles/393666)**

Aug. 14, 2026

**Enewsletter Sign-up
(https://dailyjournal56543.ac-
page.com/newsletter)**



Alternative Dispute Resolution

Bookmark

Aug. 19, 2026

Arbitrator's law firm webinar appearance sinks \$132,000 award

A Los Angeles County judge vacated an arbitration award after finding a retired judge should have disclosed her appearance at a webinar sponsored by the law firm representing the prevailing parties.

[in](https://www.linkedin.com/sharing/share-offsite?url=https://www.dailyjournal.com/articles/393786-arbitrator-s-law-firm-webinar-appearance-sinks-132-000-award) (https://www.linkedin.com/sharing/share-offsite?url=https://www.dailyjournal.com/articles/393786-arbitrator-s-law-firm-webinar-appearance-sinks-132-000-award) [X](https://www.twitter.com/intent/tweet?url=https://www.dailyjournal.com/articles/393786-arbitrator-s-law-firm-webinar-appearance-sinks-132-000-award) (https://www.twitter.com/intent/tweet?url=https://www.dailyjournal.com/articles/393786-arbitrator-s-law-firm-webinar-appearance-sinks-132-000-award)

(https://www.threads.net/intent/post?text=https://www.dailyjournal.com/articles/393786-arbitrator-s-law-firm-webinar-appearance-sinks-132-000-award) [f](https://www.facebook.com/sharer/sharer.php?u=https://www.dailyjournal.com/articles/393786-arbitrator-s-law-firm-webinar-appearance-sinks-132-000-award) (https://www.facebook.com/sharer/sharer.php?u=https://www.dailyjournal.com/articles/393786-arbitrator-s-law-firm-webinar-appearance-sinks-132-000-award)

u=https://www.dailyjournal.com/articles/393786-arbitrator-s-law-firm-webinar-appearance-sinks-132-000-award)



Ehab M. Samuel

A retired judge's undisclosed appearance at a webinar sponsored by the law firm representing the prevailing side in an arbitration created enough doubt about her impartiality to require the award to be vacated, a Los Angeles County judge ruled.

The underlying real estate dispute resulted in an award requiring Elden Investments LLC to return a \$132,265 deposit with interest and pay attorney fees and costs. Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Wendy Chang granted Elden's cross-petition to vacate the award and denied the buyers' petition to confirm it.

The dispute will now return to arbitration before a new arbitrator, attorneys for both sides said in phone interviews Tuesday.

Orbit IP LLP partner Ehab M. Samuel, who represents Elden with firm attorney Robert W. Dickerson Jr., said Chang's ruling vindicated their client.

"Justice was served. Our client is very happy with the outcome and is looking forward to an arbitration with an arbitrator that has no appearance of bias or impartiality," Samuel said.

Klinedinst PC shareholder Daniel A. Lawton, who represents the two buyers, disagreed.



**Robert W.
Dickerson Jr.**

"Form over substance. Gamesmanship over justice," Lawton said.

Lawton said his clients are evaluating their options, including an appeal.

On Aug. 12, Chang found retired San Diego County Superior Court Judge Randa M. Trapp, now a JAMS neutral, should have disclosed her participation in Klinedinst PC's "Trailblazers," a public webinar highlighting women in law, while the arbitration was pending.

In her order, Chang wrote that the issue was not actual bias, but whether a reasonable person could doubt Trapp's impartiality.

Chang found the circumstances went beyond routine professional contacts because the Klinedinst-sponsored event brought prestige to Trapp while also serving partly as marketing for the firm.

"All of this is only highlighted by the fact firms do not normally present events like this to the public; such is not within the core business of the firm. It is extra. It is, in part, altruism, but it is also, in part, marketing for the firm," Chang wrote.

Chang compared the case to *Mt. Holyoke Homes, L.P. v. Jeffer Mangels Butler & Mitchell LLP*, a 2013 decision by the 2nd District Court of Appeal vacating an award after an arbitrator failed to disclose that he listed a partner at a law firm appearing before him as a professional reference.

Samuel said the ruling is a significant application of California's arbitration disclosure requirements following the 2013 *Mt. Holyoke* decision.

Lawton argued Trapp's participation was innocuous, describing it as an uncompensated, one-hour public webinar about women in law with no evidence of an improper relationship.

According to court filings, the webinar occurred March 19, 2025, about two weeks after Trapp issued an interim award and while attorney fees and other matters remained pending.

Elden argued Trapp never disclosed the appearance. Lawton countered that the webinar was publicly advertised and Elden could have raised the issue before the final award.

Trapp ultimately found Elden breached the underlying purchase agreement and ordered the defendant to return the \$132,265 deposit with interest and pay \$71,880 in attorney fees and \$18,014.09 in costs.

The dispute arose from a 2022 agreement to buy a 10,913-square-foot commercial condominium in Paramount. The buyers sought to confirm the award in San Diego County, where Elden sought to vacate it before the case was transferred to Los Angeles County. *Hall et al. v. Elden Investments LLC*, 26STCP01203 (L.A. Super. Ct., filed May 28, 2025).

#393786

Devon Belcher

Daily Journal Staff Writer
devon_belcher@dailyjournal.com (mailto:devon_belcher@dailyjournal.com)

For reprint rights or to order a copy of your photo:

Email Jeremy_Ellis@dailyjournal.com
(mailto:Jeremy_Ellis@dailyjournal.com) for prices.
Direct dial: 213-229-5424

Send a letter to the editor:

Email: letters@dailyjournal.com
(mailto:letters@dailyjournal.com)

Enewsletter Sign-up (<https://dailyjournal56543.ac-page.com/newsletter>)

Current News (https://www.dailyjournal.com/articles/)	Daily Appellate (https://www.dailyjournal.com/articles/)	Top 100 (/special_reports?report_type=Top+100)	Antitrust (/special_reports?report_type=Antitrust)	Daily Commerce (Los Angeles, CA) (http://www.dailycommerce.net/)
Columns (/columns)	Verdicts (https://www.dailyjournal.com/articles/)	Top Bankruptcy (/special_reports?report_type=Top+Bankruptcy)	Banking & Financial Services (/special_reports?report_type=Banking+%26+Financial+Services)	The Daily Transcript (San Diego) (http://www.sdtranscript.com/)
Discipline Report (/articles/cal_lawyer?category=Discipline+Report)	Judicial Profiles (/judicial_profiles)	Top Boutiques (/special_reports?report_type=Top+Boutiques)	CLAY awards (/special_reports?report_type=CLAY+awards)	Riverside Business Journal (http://www.riversidejournal.net/)
On The Move (/on-the-move/new)	ADR Profiles (/adr_profiles)	Top Cannabis Lawyers (/special_reports?report_type=Top+Cannabis+Lawyers)	Commercial Litigators (/special_reports?report_type=Commercial+Litigators)	Orange County Reporter (http://www.ocreporter.news/)
Podcasts (/podcast)	Firm Profiles (/small_firms)	Top Family Law Lawyers (/special_reports?report_type=Top+Family+Law+Lawyers)	Cyber/AI (/special_reports?report_type=Cyber%2FAI)	San Jose Post-Record (http://www.postrecord.news/)
Videos (/videos)	Corporate Counsel (/corporate_counsels)	Top Health Care Lawyers (/special_reports?report_type=Top+Health+Care+Lawyers)	Estate & Wealth (/special_reports?report_type=Estate+%26+Wealth+)	The Inter-City Express (Hayward) (http://www.intercityexpress.net/)
	People (/people)	Top Intellectual Property (/special_reports?report_type=Top+Intellectual+Property)	Intellectual Property (/special_reports?report_type=Intellectual+Property)	The Daily Recorder (Sacramento) (http://www.dailyrecorder.net/)
		Top Plaintiffs (/special_reports?report_type=Top+Plaintiffs)	Labor & Employment (/special_reports?report_type=Labor+%26+Employment)	The Record Reporter (Phoenix, AZ) (http://www.recordreporter.com/)
		Top Trade Secrets Lawyers (/special_reports?report_type=Top+Trade+Secrets+Lawyers)	Neutrals (/special_reports?report_type=Neutrals)	
		Top Under 40 (/special_reports?report_type=Top+Under+40)	New Laws (/special_reports?report_type=New+Laws)	
		Top Verdicts (/special_reports?report_type=Top+Verdicts)	Niche Lawyers (/special_reports?report_type=Niche+Lawyers)	
		Top Women (/special_reports?report_type=Top+Women)	Probate (/special_reports?report_type=Probate)	
			Professional Responsibility (/special_reports?report_type=Professional+Responsibility)	
			Real Estate/Development (/special_reports?report_type=Real+Estate%2FDevelopment)	
			Recruiting (/special_reports?report_type=Recruiting)	
			Special Coverage (/special_reports?report_type=Special+Coverage)	
			Technology (/special_reports?report_type=Technology)	
			White Collar (/special_reports?report_type=White+Collar)	