

**WORKERS' COMPENSATION APPEALS BOARD
STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

STEVEN D'BRAUNSTEIN, *Applicant*

vs.

**PACIFIC ATTORNEY GROUP;
STATE COMPENSATION INSURANCE FUND; LOUIE & STETTLER;
THE HARTFORD, *Defendants***

**Adjudication Numbers: ADJ16267092; ADJ16267075
Anaheim District Office**

**OPINION AND DECISION
AFTER RECONSIDERATION**

Applicant petitioned for reconsideration of the “Joint Findings of Fact” (F&A) issued on November 20, 2025, by the workers’ compensation administrative law judge (WCJ). The WCJ found, in pertinent part, that applicant was not an employee of defendant, but an independent contractor.

Applicant contends that he was an employee and that defendant failed to establish its affirmative defense.

We have received an answer from defendant. We received a request to file a supplemental petition from applicant, which we accept. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 8, § 10964.) The WCJ filed a Report and Recommendation on Petition for Reconsideration (Report) recommending that we deny reconsideration.

Thereafter, we issued an order granting the petition, pending further review of the entire record.

Subsequently, the parties successfully participated in a voluntary mediation at the Appeals Board.

On July 16, 2026, the parties advised that a proposed settlement by Compromise and Release (C&R) had been reached, and requested return of the matter to the trial level for review of the proposed settlement.

In order to expedite review and approval of the parties' settlement agreement, we will rescind the November 20, 2025 Joint Findings of Fact, and return this matter to the WCJ to consider the C&R of the parties. The WCJ may conduct such further proceedings as is deemed appropriate.

Our decision should not be construed as a ruling on the merits of the petition for reconsideration. If the WCJ does not approve the settlement, the WCJ may issue an order reinstating their original decision, or issue a new decision and/ or any other appropriate order. Any aggrieved person may timely seek reconsideration of a final decision, including a reinstated decision.

Finally, we commend the parties for successfully resolving this matter by joint agreement, without the need for further action by the Appeals Board.

For the foregoing reasons,

IT IS ORDERED as the Decision After Reconsideration of the Workers' Compensation Appeals Board that the WCJ's decision of November 20, 2025 is **RESCINDED** and this matter be **RETURNED** to the workers' compensation administrative law judge to consider the Compromise and Release and for further proceedings as is deemed appropriate.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION APPEALS BOARD

/s/ ANNE SCHMITZ, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER

I CONCUR,

/s/ KATHERINE WILLIAMS DODD, COMMISSIONER

/s/ KATHERINE A. ZALEWSKI, CHAIR



DATED AND FILED AT SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

July 23, 2026

SERVICE MADE ON THE ABOVE DATE ON THE PERSONS LISTED BELOW AT THEIR ADDRESSES SHOWN ON THE CURRENT OFFICIAL ADDRESS RECORD.

**TODD D'BRAUNSTEIN, Guardian ad Litem
THOMAS F. MARTIN
LAKEESHA JEMERSON
STATE COMPENSATION INSURANCE FUND**

EDL/oo

*I certify that I affixed the official seal of
the Workers' Compensation Appeals
Board to this original decision on this
date. o.o*