

# "Manufactured Litigation" and Other Frauds Trial Lawyers and In-House Counsel Face

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# Manufactured Litigation & Other Frauds Trial Lawyers & In-House Counsel Face

Rich Vavra, Allstate John Fitzpatrick, Wheeler Trigg O'Donnell

November 8, 2013

# Bad Faith Litigation "Potential Land Mines" for All Insurance Companies

Plaintiffs' Mantra: Defense can never prevail on a "set up" argument – to accuse plaintiff/lawyers/doctors of fraud & win - WRONG

Impossible to "set up" an Insurance Company Endless resources – can hire best lawyers/doctors If Jury finds huge verdict – too late to complain



# **Bad Faith Litigation**

Legal Background for Insurance "Set Up" Scheme

- Policy Limits: Curse of PI Lawyers regardless of real damages – case has no more value than policy limits if insured has limited assets
- Goal get around policy limits by manufacturing a claim for extra contractual liability
- Most States: Majority of policy holders have minimum limits - \$15K in Arizona; \$25K in Colorado & many states
- How to "Bust" limits: If Insurance Co "unreasonably failed to settle" w/in policy limits – 2 scenarios:
  - Non acceptance of a settlement offer by Plaintiff
  - "Unreasonable delay" by insurer in settling w/in limits
- If "bust limits" get excess over limits plus possibly treble & punitive damages & attorney fees

# Mechanics of "Set Ups"

- Plaintiff makes policy-limit demand immediately before knowing damages or policy limits, imposes arbitrary, short window of acceptance
- While offer "open" plaintiff w/holds critical evidence (medical & financial records)
- Plaintiff makes offer exclusively to insurer later accuses insurer of not communicating w/insured
- Plaintiff refuses to settle at any time after deadline
- After offer expires case goes "wild" w/damages plaintiff hires Bad-Faith lawyer as co-counsel
- After offer expires plaintiff lines up "litigation funding" or "free money" loans

# **Excess Judgments & Value of Claim**

- Plaintiff must obtain excess judgment more than policy limits
- Some states allow insurer & insured to "stipulate" to a "reasonable amount" w/out trying PI case to determine damages
- Insured then assigns his/her bad-faith claim to plaintiff – so Insurance Company is fighting both plaintiff & now his insured
- Judgment enforceable against Insurer if found to have unreasonably failed to settle case – unless can show fraud, collusion or "reasonable conduct"
- Punitives always involved generally no cap

# "Set Up" turns Ordinary case into Titantic

- Many jurors have no sympathy for an insurance company that claims it was victimized
- If Excess Judgment obtained powerful weapon for arguing Insurance company was unreasonable – could have avoided all if just settled early
- Some states do not allow evidence of an "intent to "set up" b/c doesn't meet tests of legal materiality or logical relevance
- Some courts do not allow necessary discovery such as requiring intent of insured's attorney to produce fee documents or incentives for "set up"

# If Alleging Fraud – Go BIG

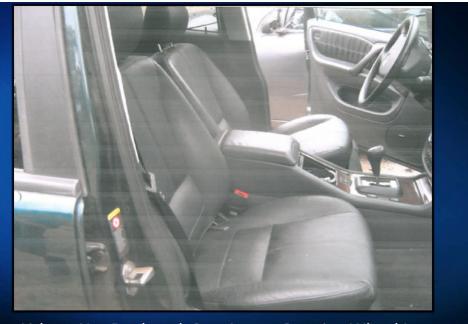
- Get discovery of documents, emails and contracts
- Be ready to attack lawyers, insured & physicians involved
- Appeal to Jury "common sense" over paying claims impacts all "shareholders" and raises everyone's premiums
- Dig "deep" in lawyer correspondence, retained experts; ask about litigation funding or "loan sharks".

### Not for the "Faint of Heart"

# Facts of Case

- 8/24/08: Allstate insured Sheri Lauk going 55 mph slams into back of Scott Martin's Mercedes SUV while he was stopped – making a L turn
  - She is 100% responsible
- Martin pulled from SUV by bystanders seen walking before EMTs arrived w/in mins of accident
  - Mercedes did its job belted; no "starring of windshield"; no bent steering wheel; seat intact
  - No LOC taken by ambulance to Swedish Hospital
- Lauk declined ambulance ride to hospital told that Martin "would be fine"





Airbags Not Deployed; Seat Intact; Steering Wheel Intact; Head Rest – Upright/Intact

### Facts of Case: 3 Visits to ER

- 8/24/08: 3 CTs normal; head normal no bruising; Dx – concussion syndrome
  - Treated & released apply ice
- 8/26/08: Returned to ER CT normal
  - Dx'd w/ post-concussion syndrome
  - Treated & released apply ice
- 8/30/08: Returns for pain in leg only; no complaints of head; released home – seen driving alone; no restrictions

# Anatomy of a Fraud

- Sept 3<sup>rd</sup>: Martins meet Richard Kaudy, wellknown plaintiff lawyer & "Set-Up Artist" of Insurance Companys at Starbucks - 9 days after accident
- Scheme begins: Kaudy's client "self employed"
  - Allstate: young woman w/low limits \$100K
     & makes \$14/hr as dog handler
  - Kaudy refers to friendly neuropsychologist – 9/10



### Martins' Attorney: Richard Kaudy



Advertises Going After Insurance Companies for "more than policy limits" DQ'd 2x for Violating Ethics in Fed Ct

- Knows "Red Flags" of fraud advertises on web site
  - Medical records missing or not provided
  - Demands quick settlement of policy limits before enough info available about injuries
  - Marked inconsistency of claimant's version of crash w/ police reports & medical records
  - Place of contact is in a bar, coffee house
  - Unusually aggressive in pressing for a quick settlement within 30 days of crash

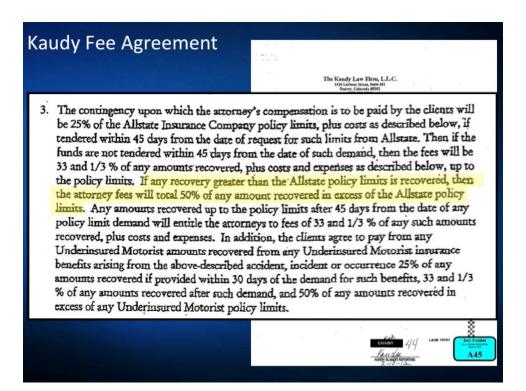
# **Set-Up Begins**

Sept 4<sup>th</sup>: Kaudy sends "Demand Letter" to Allstate – pay policy limits w/in 30 days
Policy Limits: \$100K - clock starts ticking but not a single medical record produced
Sept 5<sup>th</sup>: Kaudy calls Allstate – says Martin has a Traumatic Brain Injury ("TBI") – no doctor has yet made that diagnosis
Allstate Adjuster – Karla Cosgrove begins

 Allstate Adjuster – Karla Cosgrove begins investigation

### Kaudy's Motives

- Fee Agreement (Sept 3<sup>rd</sup>) :
  - Gets 25% if payment rec'd w/in 45 days (\$25K); 33% if payment rec'd before trial (\$33K); 50% if recovers more than \$100K - huge financial incentive (if \$3 million - \$1.5 million)
- Kaudy testified in deposition he didn't keep a copy...had standard agreement – but Allstate finally got it from 3<sup>rd</sup> party subpoena of his clients - OOPS
- Retains "Veto power" over settlement by clients
- Provides Allstate w/ limited info prior to Oct 6<sup>th</sup> that is misleading, incomplete, or false
- Why? Make it impossible for Allstate to meet his 30-day deadline to pay \$100,000 policy limits





As I indicated, I have been engaged to help them obtain insurance benefits for Scott's injuries arising from this high-impact rear-end crash that hospitalized Scott.

Scott, a self-employed truck broker and father of five, and his wife Betsy, report that Scott has been experiencing considerable difficulty in resuming his business. They estimate his weekly earnings have decreased by an estimated \$50,000.

His home business that he operates from his computer grosses by their estimate some \$4 million. He arranges transportation for goods all over the country so requires considerable multi-tasking to perform those swift-moving demands.

They searched the internet and advised that they located Dr. Steven Schmitz to perform the neuro-psychological testing suggested by Swedish Medical Center to determine the nature and extent of his cognitive deficits.

Given the significant damages and high-impact, they are offering to release any and all claims against your insured if Allstate tenders to them the amount of the liability policy limits, including any umbrella coverages that may apply, if Allstate will provide those benefits within 30 days.

### September 4th Demand Letter

- No MD dx'd Martin w/ any brain damage or disability; letter w/in 10 days of accident
- Lies/Misstatements:
  - Martin "hospitalized"
  - Martin losing \$50,000 per week; grossing \$4 million yr
  - Found Schmitz on internet
  - Fails to disclose ER records
- Oct 4<sup>th</sup>: Deadline

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Kaudy 9/8/08 Letter	The Kaudy Law Firm, L. 1416 Lariner Street, Suit Deaver, Colorado 8020 (363) 623-1885 Fax: (303) 623-1885	e 301
	Riebard M. Kandy chawfoljikmohlasz.com	Mark A. Geold mpoel/62kmdolos.com
	Sept. 8, 2008	
	Via Facsimile 1-866-440-6116 Karla Cosgrove	
Sept. 8, 2008	Senior Staff Claims Representative Allstate Insurance Co. P.O. Box 6680 Englewood, CO. 80115	~
	Re: Cheri Lauk and Scott Martin	
I forwarded your blank medica	al authorizations to Scott to sign a	nd return. He

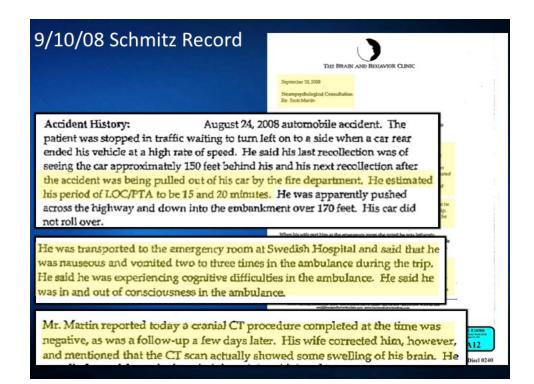
also advised he has been provided care from Swedish Medical Center three times for injuries caused by this crash. You must have been misinformed that he has never been provided medical care at that facility. Enclosed please find a copy of the Aug. 26, 2008, report from Swedish Medical Center and Dr. Michael Hunt who treated Scott for his post-concussive injury.

Also enclosed find a Landstar commission statement reflecting year to date commissions paid totaling \$99,393.30 through August 30, 2008. The commission reflects a payment of \$2,785 for the week ending Aug. 30, 2008. The commission statement for the week ending Aug. 23, 2008 totaled \$3,964.64.

Please consider this information as part of your evaluation. Let me know if you want me to patch you in for a phone call to Scott so you can ask him questions. I will ask his wife Betsy to fax me any tax returns they have so I can get them to you.

TRIAL EX 0007 PAGE 1 OF 4

False Records	
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9/10/08 Dr. Schmitz Record Market Ma					
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	ten P. Schmitz, Ph.D. cal Neuropsychologist				
œ	Rich Kaudy, Esq and Mark Phone #: 303-625-1885 Dr. Bennett Phone #: 303-487-0932	Gould, Esq		nan golden yn de Annald a Strand an Glan y gyn gyn yn yn gyn gyn yn y	Def 1 Discl 0243 A12_004

Kaudy 9/25/08 Letter	The Kaudy Law Firm, L.L. 1416 Larimer Street, Suite 3 Deuver, Colorado 80002 (303) 623-1885 Pax: (303) 623-1825	
	Rishard N. Krofy StoreffBioschero auss Sept. 25, 2008 Via Facaimile 1-866-440-6116 Karla Coogrow Seniof Scill Chiana Representative Allstate Insurance Co. P.O., Dec 6400	Mark A. Guold mennet/bloudels.com
Sept. 25, 2008 Dear Karla,	Englewood, CO. 80115 Re: Chri Lavk and Scott Martin Date of Loss: Ang. 24, 2028 Claim Number: 447:883453	
We have provided you with any Martin. We have held nothing back. We ha have provided you with whatever income le Because of Scott's brain injury he statement insurance interrogation. He conversation with you that isn't recorded he says can be converted into ammunition	ve no records from Dr. Daniel oss records provided to us to d is not equipped to withstan is able to withstand an inf so he doesn't have to worry t	l Bennett. We ate. d a recorded ormal phone that whatever

enable you to obtain whatever additional information you may need to investigate and

evaluate the claim up to your insured's policy limits. If that will be acceptable please let us know.

TRIAL EX 0010 PAGE 1 OF 1

9/9/08 Bennett Record	11/4/00 0:27 DH From: Jodi Wasserman Page 20 of 36	
	Balanta Page 4	
	Page 4 Extended Report	
CLINICAL SUMMARY		
VALIDITY: Questionable Item 50 was endorsed, which could suggest the possibility of careless or random responding or a problem with literacy.		
psychological defensiveness score was similar to the to magnify their difficulties. This lowering of defenses	unusually low, at a level seen in less than 4% of patients. His scores in an experimental sample of patients who were asked could be explained by an unusual degree of candor with the to complain. If psychosocial risk factors are present, the mptom magnification should be considered.	
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS: If there is an objective basis for this patient's reports of localized severe pain and perceived disability, this profile suggests that he is coping with the emotional stress of this fairly well. If not, his profile may suggest that factors in his psychosocial environment (such as high levels of support or <u>secondary</u> gain) offset the emotional distress that might otherwise be expected and may reinforce fits pain complaints. Psychological Treatment for pain management and any exaggerated perception of disability should be considered.		
Symptom	North, StartBillRH	
Magnification = Fraud	Def 1 Discl 0971 A24 093	

### Cosgrove Letter to Kaudy Oct. 6, 2008

We are unable to meet your demand for policy limits at this time. We have not been provided with emergency room records; paramedic reports; or medical bills pertaining to this accident. We cannot evaluate Mr. Martin's injury without this information.

We again reiterate that if you chose to allow your client sign the medical authorization previously mailed to you, we will be happy to gather the needed information ourselves at our cost.



Kaudy Gets What He Wanted – Take Allstate to Trial

Kaudy would never again agree to settle for policy limits

Deadline expired – Allstate is the ultimate target &

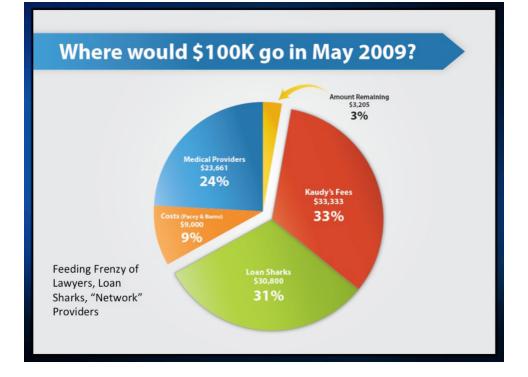
Now we Have to Manufacture Damages

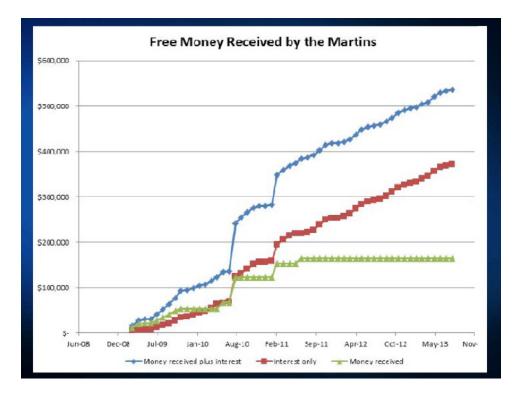
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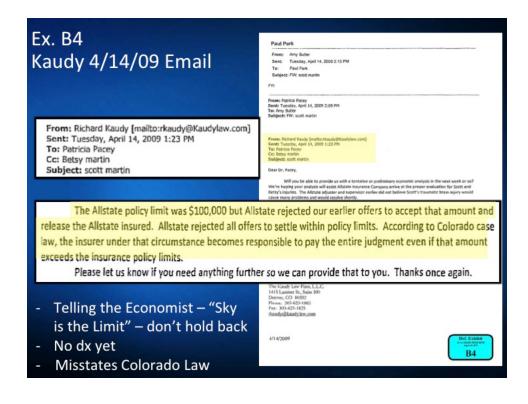
Kaudy 10/20/08 Email		Cosgrove, Karla	
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		e: Cosgrove, Karla Jubject: scott martin	
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From:	Richard Kaudy [rkaudy@Kaudylaw.co	Center bill, pdf; Carepoint Bild D, Carepoint PC 5-24-08 to 8-30-08, Se Center bill, pdf; Carepoint Bill, pdf; Radiology Imaging 5-24-08, \$ 584.09, M Imaging 5-26-08, \$132.00, Martin, pdf; Radiology Imaging bills.pdf; Swe collection notice.pdf	artin.pdf; Radiology dish Hospital bill and
Sent:	Monday, October 20, 2008 1:54 PM	Karla,	
To:	Cosgrove, Karla	Per your request 1 am enclosing the Swedish Medical Center records we just re sing their 2006 income tax return showing considerably less in gross receipts than were not grossing an estimated \$50,000 per month. This return shows net income	what they'd said earlier.
enclosing They were provided f	er your request I am enclosing the Swedis their 2006 income tax return showing con not grossing an estimated \$50,000 per m or clarification and accuracy and not over sh medical records show normal CT and o	lerably less in gross receipts than what th th. This return shows net income of some tement.	ey'd said earlie \$100k. This is
		3/2008 TRIAL	EX 0016 PAGE 1 OF 62
	itz 12/17/08 Record	TRIAL Means and Means and All and Al	nalkilities in galfs and the s. These are
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Please set the med	liation in July.		
Thank you.			
To: Witte, Christop	iary 13, 2009 2:05 PM her - Lauk - 4471881633:1 , Case Num	- ber: 2008CV4546	8
is best to hold off	back re sting ADR. Per Donna It setting ADR until he is done treatin at ADR at this time so I will be closi	g. Has no timetable when that wi	f has not finished treating. Thinks I be but thinks ADR might happen I missed something or if I need do
			A30

	an Sharks	TRANSFER AND CONVEYANCE OF PROCEEDS AND SECURITY AGREEMENT <u>derowment 1: CI 51-ADB2408-F3351</u> (Including Lion) THIS TRANSFER AND CONVEYANCE OF PROCEEDS AND SECURITY AGREEMENT (The "Agreement") is made this <u>15C</u> day of <u>MERCAL</u> , 200_, by and		
	THIS TRANSFER AND CONVEYANCE OF PROCEEDS AND SECURITY AGREEMENT (The "Agreement") is made this //st_ day of _///pa_A/, 200, by and between INJURY MANAGEMENT FUNDING, LLC, dba IM FUNDING, ("Transferee"), and Scott Denis Martin ("Transferor"), whose address is 25619 Pleasant Park Road, Conifer, CO 80433.			
RECITALS WHEREAS, Transferor has a pending claim against Allstate Insurance, Claim Number: 4471881633-ZKC, arising out of an act of negligence, accident or other incident occurring on or about August 24, 2008 in which Transferor was injured.				
		settlement or final judgment can be obtained. WHERERAS, Transferee has made its own determination to make this advance and has the set of the set of the first Transferee is convent neuraling the merits, value, risk, or validity of		
4.	4. This Agreement, and the obligation to pay over the Proceeds specified herein is totally contingent, speculative and without recourse on the part of Transferee, except for the security interest in the Litigation, and any successor claim(s) and/or litigation(s) arising out of the same facts, or arising out of the conduct of the Litigation. If there is no recovery of Proceeds by Transferor as specified herein, then Transferee shall receive <b>NOTHING</b> .			
		Densignetsek-runaluser szertet/90/00/2011 ordoza 11-o-00113 NuM deng Pr. (203) 991-5750 Pr. 1(886) 991-5750 A16, 6059		



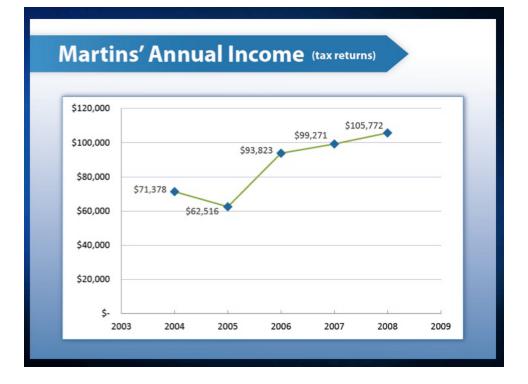


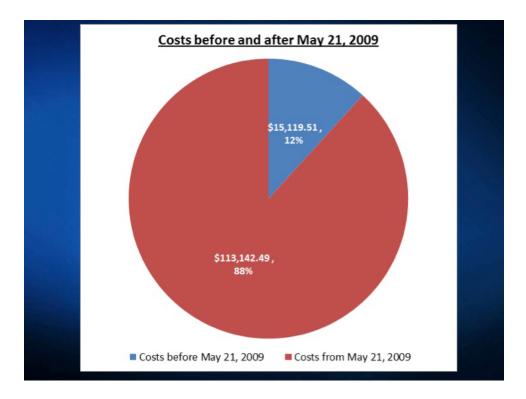


### May 19, 2009 – <u>Nine</u> Months Post-Accident – Ms. Cosgrove Learns:

- 1st Dx that Martin cannot work; first driving restrictions; "totally & permanently disabled" by Stephen Schmitz – April 27<sup>th</sup>
- Ms. Cosgrove reviews, <u>immediately</u> recommends payment of limits of \$100,000 – 5 months before trial (no deps taken or experts disclosed)
- Wage loss information still not provided

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## Kaudy Brings in Friedman

- Kaudy brings in nationally-known Plaintiffs' Lawyer from Alaska, Richard Friedman, to try admitted liability "car crash" case w/him?
- Never lost Bad Faith case won millions
- Oct 2009: Verdict \$3.3 million (asked for \$20 million & didn't bring client) Allstate pays \$100K
- Lauk REFUSES to assign rights to plaintiff files bankruptcy despite being offered \$50K by plaintiff
  - Bankruptcy Trustee hires Friedman stands to gain \$\$\$
- Oct 2010: Suit filed against Allstate for Bad Faith

Rich Friedman: The "People's Lawyer" Advocate of "Reptilian Theory" Doesn't demonize Insurance Company – just a mistake



"Trials are about telling right from wrong. Our country depends on getting the answer right."



# **Plaintiffs' Expert**



Stephen Prater Plaintiff's Insurance Expert badfaith7@aol.com

### It's Okay to Lie – All Plaintiff Lawyers Lie!

Maybe why he was sanctioned by Federal Court for lying in 2006???

 "not the 1<sup>st</sup> time you sought to obfuscate financial info; not mistake or inadvertence; but an abuse of litigation process"

#### Stephen Prater Plaintiffs' Insurance Expert

#### CREDENTIALS

30 yrs as Lawyer: Not 1 day in private practice

- Never signed a pleading; Never represented a client
- 7 yrs: GC of Allied Mgmt (Holding co)
  - "GC" of himself only lawyer when hired & left
- 30 yrs as "Adjunct Lecturer" at SC Law one night/ wk class a semester – Never on track for full-time tenured prof
- Wrote article on Bad Faith: "Black Monday" for plaintiff lawyers when unanimous Supreme Court (9-0) ruled in ERISA

#### Stephen Prater Plaintiffs' Insurance Expert

#### Legal/Financial Bias

- 15-yr relationship w/ Friedman Law Firm
  - Paid over \$1 million
  - \$100K in this case alone
- Refuses to say how much he makes as legal expert
  - "None of your business"
  - "CA won't let you get it in"
  - Affidavit is wrong someone else prepared it

### But, Mr. Prater... you signed the Affidavit... OOPS!

#### Stephen Prater Plaintiffs' Insurance Expert

# Legal/Financial Bias

40 hrs/wk x 50 wks/yr x hourly rate (\$300/hr) - \$600,000 in 2001 (\$656,000)

- Rate Today \$650/hr to \$1000/hr
  - Over \$1 million per yr last few yrs
  - Over \$10 million last 10-15 yrs
- 80 90% for plaintiff; 99% of testimony for plaintiff





J. Kent Miller Allstate's Insurance Expert

If We Followed Prater's Rules (Can't Believe Anything Plaintiffs' Lawyers Say) - Just Write a Check)

Former President of ATLA in Colorado

Would Destroy Insurance Industry – No One Could Afford It

Premiums Would Rise/Huge Fraud Kaudy "set up" Insurancy Comp from Day 1

# Conclusion

# Manufactured Litigation

- By Lawyers
- For Lawyers (and their Networks of Loan Sharks and MDs)

SHOULD NOT BE TOLERATED

DESTROY INSURANCE RAISES EVERYONE'S RATES

#### About John Fitzpatrick Partner | Wheeler Trigg O'Donnell | Denver, CO

303.244.1874 | fitzpatrick@wtotrial.com http://www.wtotrial.com/john-m-fitzpatrick-1

John Fitzpatrick ("Fitz") is a "go-to" trial attorney for high-exposure cases. Whether the case involves allegations of product defects in medical devices, pharmaceuticals, asbestos, or aviation, birth trauma or other catastrophic medical malpractice claims, or chemical releases of toxic substances, Fitz has an unparalleled record of success. He has tried over 220 cases to verdict in more than 30 states and obtained defense verdicts in the vast majority of them.

Just since joining WTO in 2007, Fitz has tried 30 cases to verdict in 10 states, including many of the designated judicial hellholes for corporate America, including Philadelphia, Baltimore, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Madison County, Illinois. He is national trial counsel to top companies such as General Electric, AT&T, Foster Wheeler, and Evenflo, and several major insurance companies in defending product liability, toxic tort, medical malpractice, and personal injury claims. Fitz lectures frequently to corporate counsel around the country on how to select experienced trial lawyers for high-exposure cases.

A former concert pianist and Army Airborne Ranger, Fitz began his legal career in 1981 with the U.S. Army JAG Corps as a prosecutor trying criminal cases in Colorado. He became the 8th Army Division's Chief Prosecutor in South Korea in 1983. He was selected to be the senior medical malpractice attorney for the U.S. Army Tort Branch at the Pentagon in 1986 where he tried 12 civil cases to verdict in federal courts across the country before entering private practice in Richmond, Virginia in 1988.

#### **Practice Areas**

- Commercial
- Environmental Litigation
- Personal Injury Defense
- Product Liability
- Professional Liability
- Toxic Torts

#### Industries

- Asbestos
- Construction & Engineering
- Health Care
- Medical Devices & Pharmaceuticals

#### Education

- University of Notre Dame Law School, J.D., cum laude, 1981
- United States Military Academy, West Point, B.S., 1974