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JURY REJECTS \$45 MILLION VERDICT IN FATAL JET SKI ACCIDENT; WSHB TRIAL TEAM PREVAILS FOLLOWING THREE WEEK TRIAL

6.14.22

(Los Angeles, CA). Following a three-week trial, a Los Angeles jury rejected a \$45 million demand for a fatality in a jet ski accident in favor of Wood, Smith, Henning & Berman's client.

"The accident occurred when our client, riding a rental jet ski for the first time in his life, rear-ended a second jet ski on which the decedent was riding. This case was challenging as, prior to our hiring, our client had pleaded guilty to misdemeanor reckless conduct in his operation of the jet ski," said trial attorney Mike Partos, a partner in WSHB's Glendale office. "Further, there were multiple witnesses to the accident, some of whom changed their stories after the original police investigation."

The Court applied a mixture of California law and Federal maritime law, as the accident occurred on a navigable waterway along the Colorado River between Nevada and Arizona, but the decedent and the Plaintiffs all resided in California. Additional issues arose from the fact that the decedent had multiple pre-existing chronic health conditions, and he died from heart failure ten days after the accident, and just hours after spinal surgery to repair injuries suffered in the crash.

Plaintiffs asked the jury to award \$45 million. After two days of deliberation, the jury awarded less than 10% of that amount (\$4.4 million). WSHB's client was, in turn, found 25% at fault (\$1.1 million), with the remaining 75% allocated to the Nevada-based jet ski rental company. However, due to the triggering of a pre-trial agreement negotiated by WSHB's legal team, our client is required to pay only \$100,000 of the verdict.

Partner Mike Partos and senior associate Rudolf Petrosyan from our Glendale office, successfully argued the client's case under full Covid protocols, pursuant to which the Judge, witnesses and jurors were masked. However, trial counsel were allowed

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Michael J. Partos

Rudolf Petrosyan

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to remove their masks for direct and cross-examination.

“This case was emotionally charged, and in an era where people are talking about nuclear verdicts, this case underscores the sophistication of juries, which I think many regrettably discount,” remarked Partos. He added, “I was exceptionally pleased the post-verdict feedback given to our senior associate Rudolf Petrosyan by the jury – they said that, when Rudolf spoke, 'he made sense.'”

Congratulations to our WSHB trial team on bringing home a favorable result for the client despite being dealt a technically difficult and emotionally tragic case.