



COUNTY OF SONOMA

575 ADMINISTRATION
DRIVE, ROOM 102A
SANTA ROSA, CA 95403

SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 1/14/2025

To: Board of Supervisors

Department or Agency Name(s): County Counsel's Office

Staff Name and Phone Number: Holly E. Rickett, Deputy County Counsel, (707)565-3739

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisorial District(s): All

Title:

Legal Services Agreement with Robbins, Geller, Rudman and Dowd, LLP, for legal representation in potential affirmative litigation against social media companies for harm caused to youth.

Recommended Action:

Authorize County Counsel, or his designee, to enter into Legal Services Agreement with Robbins, Geller, Rudman, and Dowd, LLP for representation in affirmative litigation against social media companies.

Executive Summary:

This item requests authority for County Counsel to enter into a Legal Services Agreement with Robbins, Geller, Rudman, and Dowd, LLP for legal representation during affirmative litigation against social media companies.

Discussion:

County Counsel provides legal representation, advice and counsel to the County, its governing Board of Supervisors, County Departments, special districts, and other public agencies, as mandated and authorized by California statutes and local ordinances. From time to time, the County has retained various outside law firms to represent the County in a variety of legal matters. Outside law firms are retained only when County Counsel either does not have the capacity, lacks the expertise to handle these lawsuits in-house, or has an ethical conflict. These law firms are assigned cases based upon their proven legal ability and specific experience with public entity representation.

Robbins, Geller, Rudman, and Dowd, LLP is a national law firm with significant experience representing local governments in affirmative litigation. It currently represents the County in the nationwide Opioid litigation.

Recently, several governmental entities have filed class-action or nationwide lawsuits against several social media companies, alleging that the social media companies caused harm to youth. County Counsel interviewed several nationwide law firms with experience representing local governments in such nationwide litigation. After careful review, County Counsel recommends that the Board delegate to County Counsel the authority to execute a legal services agreement with Robbins, Geller, Rudman, and Dowd, LLP to further analyze whether to join the nationwide lawsuit against the social media companies.

Strategic Plan:

N/A

Racial Equity:

Was this item identified as an opportunity to apply the Racial Equity Toolkit?

No

Prior Board Actions:

On December 10, 2024, in closed session, this Board agreed to participate in affirmative litigation and that Robbins, Geller, Rudman, and Dowd, LLP would represent the County during such litigation.

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY23-24 Adopted	FY24-25 Projected	FY25-26 Projected
Budgeted Expenses			
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures			
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
General Fund Contingencies			
Total Sources			

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

Limited County Counsel billed staff time, which is covered by the Board’s operational budget. The outside counsel will be compensated at 15% from any settlements/verdicts should the lawsuit be successful.

Staffing Impacts:			
Position Title (Payroll Classification)	Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)	Additions (Number)	Deletions (Number)
N/A			

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

N/A

Attachments:

December 10, 2024, Letter Agreement

Related Items “On File” with the Clerk of the Board:

N/A