

Another California “Thermonuclear” Verdict: \$105 Million to Employee Who Reported Workplace Harassment

California Employment Law Update on June 8, 2026

DATELINE: California—where apparently \$100 million verdicts are becoming so common that they barely qualify as news anymore.

As we have previously reported, California juries continue to hand down “[nuclear](#)” and even “[thermonuclear](#)” employment verdicts at an alarming rate. The latest addition to that growing list comes from San Diego, where a jury awarded a former substance abuse counselor \$105 million after concluding she was terminated for reporting workplace harassment, a hidden camera, and patient safety violations.

The jury found in the employee’s favor and returned the latest staggering verdict, including \$70 million in punitive damages.

If recent trends are any indication, California’s era of “thermonuclear” employment verdicts is far from over. Indeed, a \$105 million employment retaliation verdict that once would have dominated headlines now feels almost routine in a litigation environment where juries are increasingly comfortable awarding lottery-sized amounts to allegedly wronged employees.

Whether this particular verdict survives post-trial scrutiny remains to be seen – we’ll continue to monitor developments. In the meantime, those employers who are still prepared to test their luck in front of a California jury might think again and adopt arbitration before it’s too late.

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