



From the President
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 AARONS WARD

Mediation with Resolve Law Los Angeles

A FREE THREE-HOUR MEDIATION PROGRAM FOR SETTling CASES IN LA COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT

It's impossible for every case to go to trial. A simple search turns up articles and studies that give ranges of somewhere between 90% and 98% of all civil cases settling. Right now, cases are taking three to five years or more to get close to trial – and we all know that trial dates settle cases. Justice delayed is justice denied and so we need to find ways to get cases resolved sooner.

Our civil justice system functions because of settlements. And most settlements happen with the help of a mediator – either at mediation or the days and weeks thereafter with follow-up. It is a cost of doing business. And that cost – the cost of mediators – has gotten to be so very expensive. Mediators today are costing thousands and thousands of dollars, the range I've heard recently is anywhere from \$8,000 per day to as high as \$25,000 or more for a single day's mediation.

Resolve Law Los Angeles can help

The idea behind this mediation program goes back to 2017 when ASCDC and CAALA came together to help the Court settle cases in the personal injury hub. Those mediations were in person and, as many of you may recall, were held in the cafeteria in the private break-out rooms and then moved to Spring Street. It was a great success. Then Covid hit and it all came to a halt.

That's when the Court pulled together leaders from local bar organizations to help solve the problem and get cases settled sooner. Genie Harrison and Marta Alcumbrac took the lead and created Resolve Law LA, as we know it today. I spent some time recently Zooming with Genie and Marta about the great success of Resolve Law for this column – thank you both for your time and leadership!

What is Resolve Law Los Angeles?

This is a *free* three-hour mediation

program for settling cases in LA County Superior Court. It is set up very simply – a plaintiff and a defense mediator are used as settlement officers so that each side of the “v” is represented. This can include current private neutrals and former bench officers. When you sign up to be a settlement officer there are three options: 1) Plaintiff settlement officer 2) Defendant settlement officer or 3) I can serve as either a Plaintiff or Defendant Settlement Officer.

How do I get a case to participate in the Resolve Law LA program? The process is easy. First, the Court must order the case to Resolve Law LA. This can be done using an ex parte application form that is available on the Resolve Law LA website, or, at any hearing with the court, let them know the parties would like to be referred to the program and have the Court make an order.

Second, the parties find dates when everyone is free. Then, Plaintiff's counsel goes to www.ResolveLawLA.com, registers the case and inputs information about parties, attorneys, and the available dates. The dashboard makes this very easy as it visually illustrates when there are open dates with green dots on the calendar, showing a match of a plaintiff and a defendant settlement officer.

Once the dates are selected, the Resolve Law LA system communicates with all the players with the information (to your computer or phone) so that you can have your session. It's all automated – dates, deadlines, Zoom links, everything.

Five days before, the MSC parties upload their brief to the system – it is *not* sent to the other side – they are entirely confidential.

Then, the Resolve Law LA mediation is held entirely online. Just like any other Zoom mediation or deposition. Adjustors, party representatives, everyone can participate online. No one needs to drive downtown. The first three hours are free and then, if the parties want to go longer

at the neutral rates, that is entirely up to them.

Does it work? Yes, it is extremely successful! From Resolve Law LA's creation in July 2021 through the end of July 2025:

- 3,465 virtual volunteer-staffed MSC's (PI + employment cases)
- 2,235 settled or in continued negotiations
- 64.5% success rate!

These numbers include more than 1,700 employment cases, and the success rates are even better in employment cases than in the personal injury cases.

Call for volunteers

As Genie and Marta told me, there has only been one complaint about Resolve Law LA – “we need more settlement officers settling more cases!” In fact, there is currently a backlog of cases that want to participate in the program and not enough dates and panel mediators. There is an easy solution. Volunteer.

To qualify as a Settlement Officer, attorneys must have at least 10 years of litigation experience and be a member of ASCDC, BHBA, CAALA, CELA, LA-ABOTA or LACBA. Please sign up. Not just practicing lawyers, but private neutrals too. There are more than enough cases and mediations for all the private neutrals in Southern California for the private-pay cases. Imagine if every private neutral in Southern California dedicated one pro bono day a month to staffing this amazing program; it would help alleviate the backlog of cases who want to use Resolve Law.

Every case can't go to trial, but if we all chip in, help, and volunteer, cases would settle sooner. If we can help a handful of cases settle a little bit sooner, then justice won't be delayed for that person.

