

SUMMARY STATEMENT

St. Luke's Health System, LTD v. Rodriguez
Docket No. 51244

This is an appeal from a judgment in favor of St. Luke's Health System, Ltd.; Chris Roth, the CEO of St. Luke's; Natasha D. Erickson, MD; and Tracy W. Jungman, Nurse Practitioner, medical providers in the hospital's employment (collectively "St. Luke's"), against Diego Rodriguez and associated entities connected with Ammon Bundy and the "People's Rights Network." In their complaint, St. Luke's alleged that Rodriguez, Bundy, and other defendants, initiated a smear campaign that misrepresented St. Luke's treatment of Rodriguez's grandson and accused St. Luke's and its medical providers of participating in a conspiracy to kidnap, traffic, and kill Idaho children, which prompted public protests and threats against St. Luke's personnel and disruptions at St. Luke's medical facilities. St. Luke's alleged claims of defamation, invasion of privacy, intentional infliction of emotional distress, common law trespass, statutory trespass, violations of Idaho's Unfair Business Practices Act, violations of Idaho's Charitable Contributions Act, and civil conspiracy.

Following a series of delays, missed deadlines, and other procedural misconduct by Rodriguez, the district court struck his answer and entered a default as to liability to sanction Rodriguez for his repeated failure to comply with discovery rules and court orders. The district court also filed a warrant of attachment against Rodriguez after he failed to appear for a contempt trial. The district court then held a jury trial solely to determine damages, which Rodriguez did not attend, and the jury returned a \$52.5 million verdict in favor of St. Luke's. The district court subsequently entered a permanent injunction, restricting Rodriguez from making further defamatory statements or harassing St. Luke's and its medical providers.

Rodriguez appealed the judgment and injunction, asserting both judicial and jury bias, as well as violations of his First, Fifth, Sixth, and Fourteenth Amendment rights. Rodriguez, who represented himself throughout the proceedings below and on appeal, argued that he does not possess legal training and cannot be expected to navigate the complexities of the legal system. He also alleged, among other things, that he could have easily demonstrated to the jury that his claims against St. Luke's were either true, or something he believed to be true, had he been permitted to present his case at trial.

The Idaho Supreme Court affirmed the judgment and injunction against Rodriguez, concluding that Rodriguez's arguments were unpreserved, waived, or lacked any factual or cogent legal basis. The Court explained that Rodriguez continuously flouted discovery requests and orders and refused to appear for a deposition or to cooperate with scheduling one. Despite several orders to comply and graduated sanctions, Rodriguez persisted in refusing to comply and the district court ultimately reasonably concluded that there was no alternative to striking his answer and entering default because every other measure had failed to secure his compliance with pretrial discovery and deposition requests.

******This summary constitutes no part of the Court's opinion. It has been prepared by court staff for the convenience of the public.******