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Trump, Claiming He Has "Ph.D. in Legal Fees," Dukes it Out With Lawyers



"I have dealt with a lot of lawyers and paid a lot of legal fees," Donald Trump told the NYLJ recently. "I have a Ph.D. in legal fees. I know when fees are fair and when they are not."

Trump, which hired Morrison Cohen's [David Scharf](#) to represent him in a suit against a golf course contractor that he said overcharged him, is now claiming that Scharf, in turn, overcharged Trump in legal fees. Here's a story from the [NYLJ](#).

The malpractice suit, filed last year in Westchester County Supreme Court, reportedly claims that Morrison Cohen treated him like a "cash cow" and performed unnecessary work to generate higher bills. Justice Kenneth W. Rudolph permitted the case to move forward last month.

In response, Morrison Cohen's chairman, [David Scherl](#), said Trump believes he's entitled to a discount on a fair bill in a successful case because of who he is. "That may be significant to some firms," said Scherl, "but not to us." Morrison Cohen has counterclaimed for \$470,000 in legal fees it says remain unpaid. Trump, who said he has already paid Morrison Cohen \$1 million in fees, is asking for \$3 million in damages in his malpractice suit.

According to the report, Scharf represented the Trump Briarcliff Manor Development company in a suit filed against a contractor hired to work on the Trump National Golf Club in Briarcliff Manor, N.Y. The suit claimed the contractor overcharged on a contract for earth-moving work and also walked off a separate contract for infrastructure work, causing the project to be delayed. Justice Rudolph, who also oversaw that case, awarded Trump around \$2 million in damages for breach of the earth-moving contract, but only around \$40,000 for the infrastructure contract. The judge also awarded Trump around \$1.3 million in attorney fees.

In his malpractice suit, Trump maintains that Morrison Cohen should have advised against pursuing the infrastructure contract claims because it was foreseeable the legal costs incurred would far outstrip any recovery. Trump told the NYLJ that the law firm was preoccupied with fees throughout the case. "Ninety percent of the conversations I had with David Scharf were about legal fees, not the case," he said. "We won the case because I'm a great witness."

Scharf, featured [here](#) in Crain's biz, told the NYLJ that he stands by his work. It was necessary to address the infrastructure issues because they had been raised by the opposing side, he said. Scharf added that he was "disappointed and disheartened" to be in a collection dispute with Trump after the firm achieved "a great result."

LB Tangential Trivia of the Day: Morrison Cohen employs [Josh Saviano](#) (Yale, Cardozo law) as an associate. Not ringing any bells? Saviano, a child actor, played Paul in "The Wonder Years," that addictive family sitcom that ran from 1988 to 1993. Paul was the bespectacled best friend of Kevin Arnold (Fred Savage), the show's star.

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