Firm Receives Favorable Decision in Sentis Group, Inc., Appellate Matter

March 30, 2009

The 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals vacated an order of dismissal over charges of discovery abuses entered by the trial court, reversed his denial of a motion to recuse himself and remanded the case for reassignment. Overland Park attorney Fred Starrett has served as lead attorney in this matter for the firm client, Sentis Group Inc. and its owner Alan Barazi. *Sentis Group Inc. v. Shell Oil Co.,* No. 07-2308 (8th Cir.)

The decision from the 8th Circuit was released March 24. In reversing the trial court the majority held: “In these circumstances, we believe ‘the reasonable man, were he to know all the circumstances, would harbor doubts about the judge’s impartiality.’”

"This decision now allows this case to be heard on the merits," said Mr. Starrett, who is joined by Curt Tideman, Rebecca King, Rachel Stephens, and Matt Corbin on the legal team. "We look forward to having a chance to have a voice in court in this new stage of the dispute."

At issue is a contract between the firm client and Shell Oil Co., which governed the operation of 29 mini-mart gas stations in the Kansas City area. Shell's expense and profit figures were challenged in the lower court, and Sentis Group Inc. sought $28 million in damages for alleged fraud and breach of contract under the Petroleum Marketing Practices Act.

This recent turn of events comes on the heels of last year's four week trial, also in which Shell Oil Co. was adverse. In that case, Mr. Starrett successfully sought a verdict before a U.S. District Court jury in California of $2 million in favor of firm client Pacific Fuel Company, LLC. Claims in that dispute were fraud, concealment and punitive damages against Shell Oil Company and Equilon Enterprises, LLC, in regard to a lease and contract to operate multiple Shell branded gas stations in the Los Angeles area. *Pacific Fuel, LLC v. Shell Oil Company and Equilon Enterprises, LLC, CV06-0225-AG (AJWX).*

Mr. Starrett was inducted into the Litigation Counsel of America in 2008. He has tried more than fifty jury trials and has handled litigation throughout this region, including extensive appellate practice in the state and federal courts. Among the types of cases he has handled are copyright infringement, residential, commercial and heavy construction, injuries, product liability, and professional and product liability.

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