Second Supplement to Memorandum 2015-46

Relationship Between Mediation Confidentiality and Attorney Malpractice and Other Misconduct: Public Comment

Attached for the Commission’s consideration are the following additional comments on this study of the relationship between mediation confidentiality and attorney malpractice and other misconduct:

Comments & Related Materials That Oppose the Commission’s Preliminary Approach

Exhibit p.

- Michael Barry, San Diego (10/5/15) ............................................. 1
- Anthony Deutsch, San Diego (10/6/15) ................................. 2
- Laura Kass-Moreno (10/5/15) ..................................................... 3
- Daniel J. Kelly, Napa (10/6/15) .............................................. 4
- Cary Lowe, San Diego (10/5/15) ........................................... 8
- Robert Macfarlane (10/7/15) .................................................... 9
- Steve Manos, San Diego (10/5/15) ........................................ 10
- Joe Nalven (10/5/15) ................................................................. 11
- Elizabeth O’Brien (10/6/15) .................................................... 12
- Cyril Reinicke, San Diego (10/5/15) ....................................... 13
- Christina Simokat (10/5/15) ...................................................... 14

1. For other recently submitted comments and materials, see Memorandum 2015-45, Exhibit pp. 8-31; First Supplement to Memorandum 2015-45, Exhibit pp. 1-8; Memorandum 2015-46, Exhibit pp. 1-234; First Supplement to Memorandum 2015-46, Exhibit pp. 1-57.

Any California Law Revision Commission document referred to in this memorandum can be obtained from the Commission. Recent materials can be downloaded from the Commission’s website (www.clrc.ca.gov). Other materials can be obtained by contacting the Commission’s staff, through the website or otherwise.

The Commission welcomes written comments at any time during its study process. Any comments received will be a part of the public record and may be considered at a public meeting. However, comments that are received less than five business days prior to a Commission meeting may be presented without staff analysis.

2. For an earlier comment from Daniel J. Kelly, see Memorandum 2015-46, Exhibit p. 88.
Comments Urging Revisions of the Mediation Confidentiality Statutes to Promote Attorney Accountability

*Online Petition*

- Bill Chan (10/5/15)\(^3\) .................................................. 15

Mr. Chan’s comment provides new information regarding the signatories to the online petition.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Gaal
Chief Deputy Counsel

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3. For earlier comments from Bill Chan, see First Supplement to Memorandum 2013-47, Exhibit p. 5; Third Supplement to Memorandum 2014-60, Exhibit pp. 1-2. Mr. Chan also testified before the Commission in June 2014.
Re: Study K-402

California Law Revision Commission
C/o Ms. Barbara Gaal, Chief Deputy Counsel

Dear Ms. Gaal,

I am writing to convey my deep opposition to the Commission’s decision on August 7th to draft legislation which would remove confidentiality protections for mediators. I understand the concern with lawyer and mediator misconduct – and could support other methods of ensuring clients’ that misconduct in these sensitive situations does not go without review. I understand that many alternatives have been suggested to the Commission.

If legislation is drafted and sent to the Legislature, I will oppose it and urge others to do the same.

There is nothing – in my mind – so sacred as the assumption of confidentiality for everyone in the mediation process. All parties to it must be assured that, saving professional misconduct by mediators and lawyers, nothing discussed during the process can be discovered at a later date. If it turns out that the professional conducting the mediation cannot be trusted, I would recommend in the strongest terms that they lose their privilege to practice in California. But, I am equally opposed to making public anything the parties say in the mediation process.

In 1996, the Commission issued a statement which I think covers this very well:

“All persons attending a mediation, parties as well as nonparties, should be able to speak frankly, without fear of having their words turned against them.”

I hope the Commission will not seek legislation in 2015 to overturn their own noble philosophy of mediation.

Thanks for reviewing my concerns,

Michael V. Barry
Certified Mediator
San Diego, CA

Michael V. Barry
mvbarry1@cox.net
619-339-2496
Re: mediation confidentiality

I oppose the Commission’s August 7th decision to draft recommended legislation removing our current confidentiality protections when a mediation participant alleges lawyer misconduct. I will oppose this legislation if it goes to the Legislature and will urge organizations of which I’m a member to oppose it.

For thirty years our current right to choose confidential mediation and also to opt out of it has served the people and courts of California extremely well. Removing this right is a very radical change which should require solid evidence establishing a need. Dozens of alternative solutions have been suggested to the Commission to address the alleged problem without removing our confidentiality protections. I request you pursue these instead.

I urge you not to turn your back on the Commission’s own 1996 statement recommending our current statutory protections be enacted – “All persons attending a mediation, parties as well as nonparties, should be able to speak frankly, without fear of having their words turned against them.”

Anthony Deutsch, Esq.
7676 Hazard Center Drive, Suite 500
San Diego, CA 92108

Phone : 619-985-7240
E-Mail: asd3@cox.net
EMAIL FROM LAURA KASS-MORENO (10/5/15)

Re: Law Revision Commission’s Proposal re: Mediation Confidentiality

Dear Commissioners:

I have been a mediator for 15 years and have been an instructor of both introduction and advanced mediation courses. While I am troubled by the outcome in the Cassell case, to undermine confidentiality in the manner proposed will have a staggering effect on mediation and it's very premise.

My main concern is that confidentiality will no longer exist where a participant sues a lawyer/mediator for malpractice. In the purest sense, as mediators, we are NOT advocates, nor do we purport to give legal advice. Further, one of the basic tenets of mediation is self-determination which this also seems to contradict. What this would mean is that anytime a participant has an unsatisfactory result in a mediation, the mediator and the lawyer(s) would be open and unprotected since anyone would be able to allege malpractice in order to circumvent confidentiality. Whereas malpractice carriers might benefit greatly, the benefits of mediation would be severely undermined. There must be a better way. There must certainly be some concrete evidence of malpractice over and above the stated claim before confidentiality could be disregarded. This is certain to have an extremely devastating effect on the entire practice of mediation and of the mediator's ability to do any reality checking with the participants. I urge you to reconsider the proposed revision due to the harm it will cause and the increased burden this will place on already troubled courts.

Thank you, in advance, for your consideration.

Laura Kass-Moreno, Esq./Mediator
National Conflict Resolution Center
(619) 977-5208
lkassmoreno@gmail.com
October 1, 2015

Barbara S. Gaal
Chief Deputy Counsel
California Law Revision Commission
4000 Middlefield Road, Room D-2
Palo Alto, CA 94303

Re: California’s Zealously Guarded Mediation Privilege

Dear Ms Gaal,

As you will recall I previously wrote you in August and you kindly replied to me and advised of the Commission meeting scheduled for October 8th. I will then be attending a board meeting of the International Society of Barristers in Georgia and would ask that this letter and my attached C.V. be presented to the Commission so it can evaluate my perspective.

The above caption to this letter is the same caption the California Court of Appeal used to head a portion of its opinion in Kurtin v Elieff (2013), 215 Cal. App. 4th 455, 474. As an experienced mediator over the years I have grown to appreciate the vital importance of confidentiality to the process. In a word it is called trust.

The Daily Journal recently profiled entertainment and employment law mediator Greg Derin of Los Angeles. While I don’t know Mr. Derin I do agree with his comments in the article as follows:

- “When a mediator says I resolve 98 percent of my mediations, there’s something wrong with that statement because the mediation is not about us, it’s about empowering the parties to find a resolution.” (emphasis added)
- “One of the central factors for a successful mediation is trust - and gaining that can take time.” (emphasis added)

The same article describes a pivotal movement in one of Mr. Derin’s mediations where he asked a litigant “How did that make you feel?” Then “the client, who had sat with her arms crossed for three hours, turned to Derin and just opened up with all kinds of information.” And, “after that exchange she was ready to get to a place of bargaining.” I can verify that I have had countless similar situations where a litigant, upon being reminded that what is said is confidential, then opens up and a trusting relationship is established which then usually results in resolution of the case.

The key to establishing trust is the litigants know that their confidential disclosures will not be used against them then or ever. Without the confidentiality assurance I doubt litigants will be forthcoming. Rather, I can easily envision a system lacking candor and resulting in a new game where the client is cautioned to remain silent (“Mirandized”) and the lawyers will play “spin the mediator”. Trust me, that game will not result in closure.

A reading of Commission materials seems to indicate a fear that confidentiality is
somehow protective of potential attorney malpractice claims that occur during the mediation and therefore confidentiality should be scuttled. Maybe I am a poor judge of what goes on around me, but in the over 1500 mediations I have handled I have not been witness to such malpractice. I have talked to numerous colleagues who serve as mediators and they have not experienced this “mediation malpractice” phenomenon. It makes me think the Commission has been asked to build a straw man of epithet and then to tailor a remedy to combat him. The actual effect of confidentiality is that it has served us well in the mediation process and, indeed, is the linchpin in bringing disputes to resolution prior to going to Court. Doing away with confidentiality in mediation will result in fewer resolutions and will ultimately mean hanging one more albatross around the neck of an already strained and grossly underfunded judicial apparatus. To the litigants it will mean further running a gauntlet of time, legal expense and the like.

In my prior letter I likened the scuttling of the mediation privilege to “throwing out the baby with the bathwater”. It remains an apt description.

I thank you and the Commission for letting me give you my perspective. Be mindful I am gainfully retired. Thus, I do not have any financial or other interest directing my thoughts on this subject. Rather, I have enjoyed the wonderful world of being a mediator and seeing how this process really works. It works in large part because of a simple formula: confidentiality + resulting trust = resolution. I seriously caution against using legal alchemy on this formula for fear it will result in turning gold into dross.

Very truly yours,

Daniel J. Kelly
DANIEL J. KELLY
3553 Hagen Road
Napa, CA 94558
Phone: (707) 226-1835
Fax: (707) 226-3355
ckelly4754@aol.com

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Of Counsel to the Firm, Walkup, Melodia, Kelly & Schoenberger; specializing in plaintiff’s personal injury and wrongful death litigation, and the mediation of personal injury cases.

Co-Founder of Judicial Resources, Inc. (a firm specializing in alternative dispute resolution), now merged with Judicial Arbitration & Mediation Services, Inc.

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND:

B.A. (Economics) San Jose State University
J.D. Santa Clara University School of Law

PUBLICATIONS:

Editor-in-Chief, Santa Clara University Law Review (1968-69)

Co-Editor, “San Francisco Trial Lawyer” (1980-82)

Co-Author of the RUTTER GROUP three-volume text, California Practice Guide-Personal Injury

Author of Chapter, “Structured Settlements” in California Torts

Author or Co-Author of the following Law Review Articles:

- “Updating the California Guest Statute”, 22 Hastings Law Journal 1233 (1972)

ASSOCIATIONS:

• Member, California Bar
• American Board of Trial Advocates (President, San Francisco Chapter 1994)
• Fellow: American College of Trial Lawyers
• Fellow: International Society of Barristers (President 2003-2004)
• Fellow: International Academy of Trial Lawyers
• Association of Trial Lawyers of America
• California Trial Lawyers Association (Board of Governors 1988-1992)
• San Francisco Trial Lawyers Association (President 1982)
• Advisory Board, The Markkula Center for Applied Ethics (1996-2006)
• Board of Regents, Emeritus Member, Santa Clara University
• Board of Visitors, Santa Clara University Law School (Chairman 1991-1993)
• Member, Medical-Legal Interprofessional Committee of the San Francisco Bar Association and San Francisco Medical Society (Co-Chair 1985-1986)

LEGAL AWARDS:

Recipient, James Emery Scholarship, Santa Clara University School of Law (1967-69)

Recipient, Community Service Award, Santa Clara University School of Law (1969)

Recipient, Outstanding Service Award, San Francisco Trial Lawyers Association (1981)

Recipient, Outstanding Leadership Award, San Francisco Trial Lawyers Association (1982)

Recipient, Lawyer of the Year Award, Santa Clara University, School of Law (2001)

Recipient, Don E. Bailey Award for Civility and Professionalism, SF Chapter of the American Board of Trial Advocates (2013)

Listed in The Best Lawyers in America (1987-2014)

Listed in Northern California Super Lawyers (2007-2014)
EMAIL FROM CARY LOWE (10/5/15)

Re: Mediation Confidentiality

California Law Revision Commission
c/o Ms. Barbara Gaal, Chief Deputy Counsel

Re: Study K-402

Dear Ms. Gaal:

I am extremely concerned about the Commission’s apparent intention to weaken mediation confidentiality. My consistent experience is that parties in mediation rely greatly on confidentiality, and weakening that in any way will severely undermine the efficacy of mediation.

Accordingly, I oppose the Commission’s August 7th decision to draft recommended legislation removing the current confidentiality protections when a mediation participant alleges lawyer misconduct. I will oppose this legislation if it goes to the Legislature and will urge organizations of which I’m a member to oppose it.

For thirty years our current right to choose confidential mediation, and also to opt out of it, has served the people and courts of California extremely well. Removing this right is a very radical change which should require solid evidence establishing a need. Numerous alternative solutions have been suggested to the Commission to address the alleged problem without removing our confidentiality protections. I request you pursue these instead.

I urge you not to turn your back on the Commission’s own 1996 statement recommending our current statutory protections be enacted – “All persons attending a mediation, parties as well as nonparties, should be able to speak frankly, without fear of having their words turned against them.”

Thank you for your consideration.

Cary D. Lowe, Ph.D., AICP
Land Use Attorney & Mediator
3517 Garrison Street
San Diego, CA  92106
Tel: (619) 255-3078
E-mail: carylowe@cox.net
EMAIL FROM ROBERT MACFARLANE (10/7/15)

Re: OPPOSITION TO THE AUGUST 7 DECISION TO DRAFT RECOMMENDED LEGISLATION REMOVING OUR CURRENT MEDIATION CONFIDENTIALITY PROTECTIONS

Dear Ms. Gaal:

Having conducted over 4,000 divorce mediations, it is my considered opinion that the confidentiality of mediation is crucial to its magnificent success in serving society. The result of what is being proposed will be to make the mere allegation of misconduct on the part of the peacemaker, the turnkey solution to circumventing the now specious confidentiality of the process. How will we attract qualified people to the profession of peacemaker when they can so easily be made litigation fodder by the disputants they are trying to help? It is my great fear that, in an effort to get rid of a few bad apples, we are about to chop down the entire orchard.

The confidentiality of mediation attracts people to mediation who would not otherwise be interested in resolving things peacefully. It creates the possibility for solutions that would not otherwise even be discussed, for concerns over their potential for use to one’s disadvantage. It creates a permanency of resolutions that would not otherwise exist, due to high conflict personality disorders and buyer’s remorse.

In a society where privacy and confidentiality are almost nonexistent, there is one remaining safe house, one place where people can go to discuss their issues with no downside. If the conversation is not productive, it never happened. And how much more likely is it to be productive, when it can be candid and without limits? The confidentiality of mediation is priceless.

Sincerely yours,
Robert J. Macfarlane
Attorney-Mediator
760-753-3766
EMAIL FROM STEVE MANOS (10/5/15)

Re: Mediation Confidentiality

California Law Revision Commission
c/o Ms. Barbara Gaal, Chief Deputy Counsel

Re Study K-402

Dear Commission,

As a mediator since 1993, I oppose the Commission’s August 7th decision to draft recommended legislation removing our current confidentiality protections when a mediation participant alleges lawyer misconduct. I will oppose this legislation if it goes to the Legislature and will urge organizations of which I’m a member to oppose it.

For thirty years our current right to choose confidential mediation and also to opt out of it has served the people and courts of California extremely well. Removing this right is a very radical change which should require solid evidence establishing a need. Dozens of alternative solutions have been suggested to the Commission to address the alleged problem without removing our confidentiality protections. I request you pursue these instead.

I urge you not to turn your back on the Commission’s own 1996 statement recommending our current statutory protections be enacted – “All persons attending a mediation, parties as well as non-parties, should be able to speak frankly, without fear of having their words turned against them.”

Sincerely,

Steve P. Manos
Mediator, National Conflict Resolution Center
San Diego, CA
Re: Opposition to CLRC recommendation to remove current protections for mediators

As I understand, the California Law Revision Commission voted on August 7, 2015 to draft a recommendation to remove current protections for mediators.

As you are aware, the context for open-minded searches for solutions to conflict and disagreements benefits from confidential and frank discussions. Once that confidentiality is removed, there is no point to mediation since the temptation to gain access to those confidential and frank discussions is too great.

Having been a litigator, and having taught lawyering skills -- AND still teaching about human behavior as a cultural anthropologist -- there is little doubt that vitiating confidentiality in mediation is a death knell to this important step to problem solving, especially in a litigious society.

Hopefully, you will reconsider the recommendation and, at the very least, do some behavioral studies on what individuals would do under the current versus the proposed framework.

Sincerely,

Joe Nalven (retired from the law, but not from life)

And if you need the various titles, you can add Ph.D., J.D. But really, common sense is all that is required in this situation.
Re: Confidentiality

I founded the San Diego Mediation Center, now National Conflict Resolution Center, then went on to establish mediation centers/programs in 17 countries.

Cannot believe this is a consideration some 30 years later. This was a conversation that was timely in the 80's....one that was debated throughout the 90's....and yet here we are again. Gutting mediation benefits no one. Please refer to the academic work of the esteemed Don Weckstein, University of San Diego Law School. He was the most respected source for our industry.

Respectfully,

Liz O'Brien

Partners For Democratic Change, ExVP, Ret.
San Diego Mediation Center, Past President, Ret
Re: Opposition to K-402

California Law Revision Commission
c/o Ms. Barbara Gaal, Chief Deputy Counsel

Re Study K-402

I oppose the Commission’s August 7th decision to draft recommended legislation removing our current confidentiality protections when a mediation participant alleges lawyer misconduct. I will oppose this legislation if it goes to the Legislature and will urge organizations of which I’m a member to oppose it.

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Cyril A. Reinicke
Volunteer, Small Claims Court Mediator
NCRC
San Diego California
Re: K 402 Mediation and Confidentiality

Dear Ms Gaal,

I would strongly urge your Commission to keep confidentiality protections for mediations. While I understand your intention to protect parties from misconduct from their mediators, this is the wrong approach.

I have practiced mediation for more than 10 years in a wide variety of cases, and I have taught mediation in several colleges in San Diego, and currently I am developing a course for environmental and land use mediation at CSU San Marcos.

Confidentiality is one of the key components to making mediation successful. A mediator has only a brief period to establish the trust and confidence it takes to help parties move forward, and removing those protections simply moves us backward toward traditional legal outcomes.

Mediation is a powerful and important tool in moving our society forward, to become more mature and peaceful. Please keep the confidentiality protections in place.

Thank you,

Christina Simokat
Lecturer, CSU San Marcos
Re: Client input

Dear Ms. Gaal,

I just read your latest memo, 2015-45 supplemental. You may not be getting all the responses to the petition. I had to do some cut and paste but attached is a pdf containing all signatures with dates. Organize.org includes Citizens Against Legalized Malpractice as the first signatory which results in the total of 46. The leftmost numbers are the numbers from your prior memo of 09/03/15 showing 26 signatories which I have included. The increase has been 19 plus the missing signature of Dieter Scherer from 08/07/15 which brings the new signatures to 20.

I believe Elizabeth Moreno is one of the authors of AB2025.

Best regards,

Bill Chan
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TOTAL NEW 20 INCLUDING MISSING SIGNATURE FROM 2015-08-07 DIETER SCHEEREN
PERSONS SIGNING THE ONLINE PETITION (AS OF 9/3/15)

(1) John Amis, Culver City, CA
(2) Barbara Bates, Port Saint Lucie, FL
(3) Jay Bear
(4) Debra Berman
(5) Lauren Corna, Keller, TX
(6) Bret Crain, Malibu, CA
(7) Jason Halle, Fort Lauderdale, FL
(8) Jo-Anne Kennedy
(9) Karen Kline
(10) Eunice Kramer
(11) Allene Laney
(12) Jon Laney
(13) Trish Many
(14) Evelyn Moore
(15) Janelle Moore
(16) Jullie Moseley-Doyle, Lomita, CA
(17) Shanna Moyer
(18) R. Andrew Murray
(19) Laura Murray, Sacramento, CA
(20) S. Nixon
(21) Anthony Portelli
(22) Deborah Blair Porter, Manhattan Beach, CA
(23) Chip Reuben, Redondo, CA
(24) Cecilia Sparks, Seymour, IN
(25) Suzannah B. Troy
(26) Леонид Дергалев

SUPPLEMENTAL COMMENTS OF PETITIONER BRETT CRAIN

I personally experienced lawyers commuting malpractice against me and soon discovered that many others had experienced the same.

SUPPLEMENTAL COMMENTS OF PETITIONER JULLIE MOSELEY-DOYLE

I am signing this petition because it is wrong for attorneys not to be held accountable when they have lied, stolen, cheated, and or are involved in fraudulent acts against the