

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF NEVADA

Mikhail Cirkunovs v. Zuffa LLC, et al.

Cirkunovs · No. 2:25-cv-00914-RFB-BNW · Decided January 7, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the District of Nevada denied without prejudice Plaintiffs’ unopposed motions to seal or redact a status report and a brief concerning an arbitration search-term proposal. The court held that reliance on confidentiality designations under a stipulated protective order, without additional justification under the applicable public-access standard, was insufficient, while temporarily maintaining the filings under seal and setting a deadline for any renewed sealing motions.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of Nevada
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of Nevada
DECIDED	January 7, 2026
DOCKET	2:25-cv-00914-RFB-BNW
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiffs moved to seal or redact a December 2025 status report and a brief concerning an arbitration search-term proposal. The unopposed motions were denied without prejudice.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The decision whether to seal documents is within the court's discretion; the applicable sealing standard depends on whether the materials are judicial records and whether the motion is dispositive or nondispositive.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unknown

TOPICS

- civil procedure
- discovery dispute
- commercial litigation

PRACTICE AREAS

- civil procedure
- commercial litigation

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. What standard governs requests to seal or redact documents submitted in connection with dispositive or nondispositive motions?
2. Whether plaintiffs established sufficient grounds to seal the status report and arbitration search-term brief based solely on confidentiality designations under a stipulated protective order.

HOLDINGS

1. Judicial records are presumptively accessible to the public, and a party seeking to seal them bears the burden of overcoming the strong presumption of public access.
2. For documents attached to dispositive motions, and for technically nondispositive motions more than tangentially related to the merits, the party seeking to seal must demonstrate compelling reasons supported by specific factual findings that outweigh the public's interest in access.
3. For private materials unearthed during discovery or materials attached to nondispositive motions that are not subject to the full merits-related presumption, the court applies the good-cause standard under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 26(c).
4. A stipulated protective order or a blanket confidentiality designation, standing alone, does not justify sealing court records or establish that particular documents are secret or confidential.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Generally, the public has a right to inspect and copy judicial records.” (at 1)

“Stipulated protective orders alone do not justify sealing court records.” (at 2)

“Because judges sign off on these protective orders without making individualized findings, they do not provide a finding that any specific documents are secret or confidential to overcome the presumption of public access.” (at 2)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiffs sought to seal or redact a December 2025 status report and a brief regarding a proposed arbitration search term. The information had been designated confidential under a stipulated protective order, but plaintiffs did not agree with those designations and offered no other reason supporting continued sealing. The court temporarily maintained the documents under seal while allowing either party to file a renewed motion.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The plaintiffs filed motions to seal or redact documents submitted in the federal litigation. The District of Nevada denied the motions without prejudice because the plaintiffs relied only on confidentiality designations under a stipulated protective order and provided no independent justification for sealing. The court ordered the documents to remain sealed temporarily pending any renewed motion.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Kamakana v. City & County of Honolulu, 447 F.3d 1172, 1178-79 (9th Cir. 2006)
- Ctr. for Auto Safety v. Chrysler Grp., LLC, 809 F.3d 1092, 1101 (9th Cir. 2016)
- Pintos v. Pac. Creditors Ass'n, 605 F.3d 665, 678-79 (9th Cir. 2010)
- Foltz v. State Farm Mut. Auto. Ins. Co., 331 F.3d 1122, 1133 (9th Cir. 2003)
- Beckman Indus., Inc. v. Int'l Ins. Co., 966 F.2d 470, 475-76 (9th Cir. 1992)

OPINION

1 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT 2 DISTRICT OF NEVADA 3 * * * 4 Mikhail Cirkunovs, Case No. 2:25-cv-00914-RFB-BNW 5 Plaintiff, ORDER 6 v. 7 Zuffa LLC, et al., 8 Defendants. 9 10 Before this Court are Plaintiffs' motion to seal/redact the December 2025 status report¹ 11 and the brief regarding the arbitration search term proposal.² ECF Nos. 99, 107. These motions 12 are unopposed.

For the reasons discussed below, this Court denies Plaintiffs' motions to seal 13 without prejudice. 14 I. DISCUSSION 15 Generally, the public has a right to inspect and copy judicial records. Kamakana v. City & 16 Cnty. of Honolulu, 447 F.3d 1172, 1178 (9th Cir. 2006). Such records are presumptively publicly 17 accessible. *Id.* Consequently, a party seeking to seal a judicial record bears the burden of 18 overcoming this strong presumption.

Id. In the case of dispositive motions, the party seeking to 19 seal the record must articulate compelling reasons supported by specific factual findings that 20 outweigh the general history of access and the public policies favoring disclosure, such as the 21 public interest in understanding the judicial process. *Id.* at 1178–79 (alteration and internal 22 quotation marks and citations omitted).

The Ninth Circuit has further held that the full 23 presumption of public access applies to technically non-dispositive motions and attached 24 25 26 1 The sealed/unredacted version is at ECF No. 100. The redacted version is at ECF No. 98. 27 2 The sealed/unredacted version is at ECF No. 108.

The redacted version is at ECF No. 106. 1 documents as well if the motion is “more than tangentially related to the merits of the case.” Ctr. 2 for Auto Safety v. Chrysler Grp., LLC, 809 F.3d 1092, 1101 (9th Cir. 2016). 3 “[A] different standard applies to ‘private materials unearthed during discovery,’ as such 4 documents are not part of the judicial record.” Pintos v. Pac.

Creditors Ass'n, 605 F.3d 665, 678 5 (9th Cir. 2009) (citing Kamakana, 447 F.3d at 1180). Under Rule 26(c), a court may enter a 6 protective order “to protect a party or person from annoyance, embarrassment, oppression, or 7 undue burden or expense.” “The relevant standard for purposes of Rule 26(c) is whether good 8 cause exists to protect the information from being disclosed to the

public by balancing the needs 9 for discovery against the need for confidentiality.” Pintos, 605 F.3d at 678 (quotation omitted).

10 Given the “weaker public interest in nondispositive materials,” the court applies the good cause
11 standard in evaluating whether to seal documents attached to a nondispositive motion. Id. 12
“Nondispositive motions ‘are often unrelated, or only tangentially related, to the underlying cause
13 of action,’ and, as a result, the public’s interest in accessing dispositive materials does ‘not
14 apply with equal force’ to non-dispositive materials.” Id. (citing Kamakana, 447 F.3d at 1179).

It is 15 within the court’s discretion whether to seal documents. Id. at 679. 16 In their motions,
Plaintiffs explain that the information sought to be sealed has been 17 designated as confidential
pursuant to the Stipulated Protective Order. But Plaintiffs explain they 18 do not agree with such
designations and otherwise provide no other reason to seal. 19 Stipulated protective orders alone
do not justify sealing court records.

Kamakana, 447 20 F.3d at 1183; see also Foltz v. State Farm Mut. Auto. Ins. Co., 331 F.3d 1122,
1133 (9th Cir. 21 2003) (noting that reliance on a blanket protective order, without more, will not
make a showing 22 of good cause). Stipulated protective orders “often contain provisions that
purport to put the entire 23 litigation under lock and key without regard to the actual requirements
of Rule 26(c).” 24 Kamakana, 447 F.3d at 1183.

Because judges sign off on these protective orders without making 25 individualized findings, they
do not provide a finding that any specific documents are secret or 26 confidential to overcome the
presumption of public access. Id.; see also Beckman Indus., Inc. v. 27 Int’l Ins. Co., 966 F.2d 470,
475–76 (9th Cir. 1992) (explaining that blanket stipulated protective] As a result, Plaintiffs’
motion to seal is denied without prejudice.

If either party wishes to 2 || maintain the information in question under seal, the appropriate party
must file a new motion 3 || advancing arguments in support of the need to seal this response
information under the applicable 4 || standard. Such motion will be due no later than February 6,
2026.

In the interim, this Court will 5 || maintain ECF Nos. 100 and 108 under seal. If no such motions
are filed by the deadline provided, 6 || this Court will unseal the currently sealed briefs and any
exhibits. 7 Il. CONCLUSION 8 IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED that Plaintiffs’ motions to seal
(ECF Nos. 99 and 107) 9 || are DENIED without prejudice.

However, the Clerk’s Office is directed to maintain ECF Nos. 10 || 100 and 108 under seal until
further orders from the Court. 11 12 DATED: January 7, 2026 13 14 Ling wba we) been BRENDA
WEKSLER □ 15 UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27
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