

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Kimera Labs Inc. v. Raj Jayashankar, et al.

Kimera Labs · No. 21-cv-2137-MMA-DDL · Decided May 14, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Southern District of California granted the parties’ motions to file under seal materials relating to Daubert motions and a motion for summary judgment in a trade-secret misappropriation action. The court found compelling reasons to seal confidential trade-secret information, business processes, financial figures, and related damages information, while determining that redaction was appropriate in some filings and ineffective in others. The court also granted the parties’ joint motion to strike two filings and ordered corrected versions to be filed by May 16, 2025.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Southern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Michael M. Anello
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Southern District of California
DECIDED	May 14, 2025
DOCKET	21-cv-2137-MMA-DDL
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Defendants and Plaintiff filed ex parte motions to file unredacted versions of Daubert motions, expert materials, a motion for summary judgment, and related exhibits under seal. The parties also filed a joint motion to strike two docket filings and obtain leave to file corrected versions.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Requests to seal judicial records that are more than tangentially related to the merits require compelling reasons sufficient to overcome the strong presumption of public access; requests involving materials only tangentially related to the merits are governed by the good-cause standard.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unknown

TOPICS

- civil procedure
- trade secrets
- commercial litigation
- motions to dismiss

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

trade secrets

commercial litigation

intellectual property

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the parties established sufficient grounds under the applicable sealing standard to file specified motions and exhibits under seal.
2. Whether the court should grant the parties' joint motion to strike two docket filings and permit corrected versions to be filed.

HOLDINGS

1. For filings more than tangentially related to the merits, sealing is proper when compelling reasons outweigh the public's strong presumptive right of access; confidential trade secrets, business processes, and certain confidential financial and business information may constitute compelling reasons for sealing.
2. The court granted the parties' joint motion to strike the specified filings and permitted corrected versions to be filed.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"Accordingly, when considering a request to seal, "a strong presumption in favor of access" is generally a court's "starting point."" (Opinion at 2)

"In general, 'compelling reasons' sufficient to outweigh the public's interest in disclosure and justify sealing court records exist when such 'court files might have become a vehicle for improper purposes,' such as the use of records to gratify private spite, promote public scandal, circulate libelous statements, or release trade secrets." (Opinion at 2-3)

"For these reasons, the Court GRANTS the motions to file under seal and DIRECTS the Clerk of Court to file Doc. Nos. 401, 404, 410, 413, 416, 419, and their respective attachments, under seal." (Opinion at 6)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

The action concerns allegations that former employee-related defendants misappropriated Kimera Labs' trade secrets and confidential information to create Exocel Bio, a competing business manufacturing and selling similar products. The materials at issue included expert motions and exhibits, a summary-judgment motion, and documents containing alleged trade secrets, confidential processes, royalty and revenue figures, profits, expenditures, losses, and damages information.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Kimera Labs filed its initial complaint on December 28, 2021, an amended complaint on May 11, 2022, and a second amended complaint on November 10, 2022. During the litigation, the parties filed motions to seal materials concerning expert testimony, summary judgment, alleged trade secrets, confidential business processes, and financial information. The district court granted the motions to seal and the joint motion to strike.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Daubert v. Merrell Dow Pharmaceuticals, Inc., 509 U.S. 579 (1993)
- Kamakana v. City & County of Honolulu, 447 F.3d 1172, 1178-79 (9th Cir. 2006)
- Nixon v. Warner Communications, Inc., 435 U.S. 589, 597-98 & n.7 (1978)
- Oliner v. Kontrabecki, 745 F.3d 1024, 1025 (9th Cir. 2014)
- United States v. Business of Custer Battlefield Museum & Store, 658 F.3d 1188, 1194-95 (9th Cir. 2011)
- Settrini v. City of San Diego, No. 320CV02273RBMBS, 2022 WL 6785755, at *1 (S.D. Cal. Oct. 11, 2022)
- Nia v. Bank of America, N.A., No. 21-CV-1799-BAS-BGS, 2024 WL 171659, at *3 (S.D. Cal. Jan. 12, 2024)
- Pulse Electronics, Inc. v. U.D. Electronic Corp., 530 F. Supp. 3d 988, 1030-31 (S.D. Cal. 2021)

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