

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Stahl v. Chen, et al.

Stahl · No. 25-cv-08679-BLF · Decided December 16, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Northern District of California denied Justin Stahl’s motion for reconsideration of the denial, without prejudice, of his request to be appointed guardian ad litem for his minor children. The court found no change in law or facts, clear legal error, or established conflict of interest warranting reconsideration, and directed Stahl to submit a new guardian ad litem motion within thirty days.

OPINION

1 2 3 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT 4 NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA 5
SAN JOSE DIVISION 6 7 JUSTIN STAHL, Case No. 25-cv-08679-BLF 8 Plaintiff, ORDER
DENYING MOTION FOR 9 v. RECONSIDERATION 10 CYNTHIA CHEN, et al., [Re: ECF
No. 16] 11 Defendants. 12 13 I. BACKGROUND 14 Plaintiff Justin Stahl, proceeding pro se,
filed a complaint on behalf of himself “and as 15 Guardian Ad Litem for his minor children, W.S.
and C.S.” ECF No. 1 at 1.

He filed a Motion for 16 Appointment of Justin Stahl as Guardian Ad Litem for Minor Plaintiffs,
ECF No. 11, which the 17 Court denied without prejudice on November 21, 2025, ECF No. 14. In
that Order, the Court 18 explained that absent consent of the Minor Plaintiffs’ mother, who was
granted sole legal custody 19 by the state family court, Mr. Stahl could not be approved as
guardian ad litem.

20 On December 12, 2025, Mr. Stahl filed a Motion for Reconsideration with respect to the 21
Court’s Order Denying Without Prejudice the Motion for Appointment of Justin Stahl as Guardian
22 Ad Litem for Minor Plaintiffs W.S. and C.S. ECF No. 16 (“Mot”).

For the reasons that follow, 23 the Court DENIES the motion for reconsideration. 24 II. LEGAL
STANDARD 25 Trial courts have inherent power to reconsider, set aside, or amend interlocutory
orders at 26 any time prior to entry of a final judgment. Fed. R. Civ. P. 54(b).

The substantive standard 27 governing reconsideration of an interlocutory order is the same as that
which governs motions to 1 reconsideration are disfavored and “should not be granted, absent
highly unusual circumstances, 2 unless the district court is presented with newly discovered

evidence, committed clear error, or if 3 there is an intervening change in the controlling law.”
McDowell v. Calderon, 197 F.3d 1253, 4 1255 (9th Cir.

1999) (per curiam) (internal quotation and citation omitted). 5 The Northern District of California
also has local rules governing motions for 6 reconsideration. A motion for reconsideration may be
made on three grounds: (1) a material 7 difference in fact or law exists from that which was
presented to the court, which, in the exercise 8 of reasonable diligence, the moving party did not
know at the time of the order for which 9 reconsideration is sought; (2) the emergence of new
material facts or a change of law; or (3) a 10 manifest failure by the court to consider material
facts or dispositive legal arguments.

Civ. L.R. 7- 11 9(b). 12 III. DISCUSSION 13 In support of his motion for reconsideration, Mr.
Stahl makes two primary arguments. He 14 urges that (1) the Court failed to consider “material
facts establishing the mother’s actual conflict 15 of interest,” and (2) the Court failed to consider
dispositive legal arguments demonstrating that the 16 mother’s consent cannot be required under
these circumstances.

See Mot. at 4–11. 17 Having considered Mr. Stahl’s arguments, the Court DENIES the Motion for
18 Reconsideration. The Court finds that there is no change in law or facts that warrants
appointment 19 of Mr. Stahl as guardian ad litem for the Minor Plaintiffs.

The Court further notes that courts have 20 “broad discretion in ruling on a guardian ad litem
application.” Williams v. Superior Ct., 147 Cal. 21 App. 4th 36, 47 (2007). 22 The Court does not
find that its Order is predicated on clear legal error.

To the contrary, Mr. 23 Stahl’s declaration does not establish the Minor Plaintiffs’ mother’s actual
conflict of interest, so 24 Mr. Stahl’s legal arguments so assuming are not persuasive. Mr. Stahl’s
declaration asserting, for 25 example, that he has not sought the consent of the Minor Plaintiffs’
mother on the grounds that he 26 believes “her interests are directly adverse to the claims being
asserted on behalf of the children” 27 does not mean that there exists a conflict of interest.

ECF No. 13 ¶ 52. The Court is not prepared 1 apparently not been given notice or an opportunity
to respond with her position. 2 At bottom, Mr. Stahl’s motion amounts to a disagreement with this
Court’s ruling on the 3 ¶ facts and the law and does not warrant reconsideration. 4 ¶ IV. ORDER 5
For the foregoing reasons, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that Mr. Stahl’s Motion for 6 ¶
Reconsideration is DENIED.

An individual must be appointed to represent the children’s interests 7 ¶ going forward in this
litigation. Mr. Stahl SHALL submit a new motion to appoint a guardian ad 8 ¶ litem within thirty
days of the date of this order, on or before January 15, 2026. 9 10 Dated: December 16, 2025 TH
LABSON FREEMAN %L United States District Judge 15 16 it 4 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27
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