

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Amber Jackson-Boyd v. Patricia Brown, et al.

Jackson-Boyd · No. 2:25-cv-00674-DC-AC · Decided November 25, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of California grants attorney Robert Ross Powell’s motion to withdraw as counsel for Plaintiff Amber Jackson-Boyd. The court finds a fundamental breakdown in the attorney-client relationship, determines that withdrawal will not cause undue prejudice or delay, and allows Plaintiff thirty days to obtain new counsel or proceed pro se. The order also directs counsel to comply with California Rule of Professional Conduct 1.16(e) and provides Plaintiff’s contact information for the court record.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Dena M. Coggins
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
DECIDED	November 25, 2025
DOCKET	2:25-cv-00674-DC-AC
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	The court considered Plaintiff's counsel's noticed motion to withdraw as counsel of record under Local Rule 230(g).
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The decision whether to grant or deny a permissive motion to withdraw is committed to the trial court's discretion.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unpublished district court order; precedential status unknown.

TOPICS

civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure legal ethics and professional responsibility

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Plaintiff's counsel should be permitted to withdraw based on a breakdown in the attorney-client relationship under California Rule of Professional Conduct 1.16(b).
2. Whether the requested withdrawal would cause undue prejudice, delay, or harm to the administration of justice.

HOLDINGS

1. A district court may grant a permissive motion to withdraw when the grounds identified in California Rule of Professional Conduct 1.16(b) are established and withdrawal is appropriate after considering the reasons for withdrawal, prejudice to other litigants, harm to the administration of justice, and delay.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“For permissive withdrawals, the decision to grant or deny an attorney’s motion to withdraw is committed to the discretion of the trial court.” (at 2)

“In ruling on a motion to withdraw as counsel, courts consider: (1) the reasons why withdrawal is sought; (2) the prejudice withdrawal may cause to other litigants; (3) the harm withdrawal might cause to the administration of justice; and (4) the degree to which withdrawal will delay the resolution of the case.” (at 2)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff's counsel represented that months of unsuccessful communications, lengthy periods without responses, and lack of progress had caused a fundamental and irreconcilable breakdown in the attorney-client relationship. Counsel gave Plaintiff written notice of the intention to withdraw and provided her with the motion and supporting declaration before filing. The action remained at an early stage, and Defendants raised no concern about prejudice or delay.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Robert Ross Powell, Plaintiff's counsel of record, moved to withdraw based on a complete breakdown in the attorney-client relationship. Defendants did not oppose the motion. The case was in its early stages: Defendants had recently answered and no scheduling order had issued. The court granted the motion and gave Plaintiff thirty days to obtain new counsel or elect to proceed pro se.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Beard v. Shuttermart of Cal., Inc., No. 3:07-cv-00594-WQH-NLS, 2008 WL 410694, at *2 (S.D. Cal. Feb. 13, 2008)
- CE Res., Inc. v. Magellan Grp., LLC, No. 2:08-cv-02999-MCE-KJM, 2009 WL 3367489, at *2 (E.D. Cal. Oct. 14, 2009)

OPINION

Jackson-Boyd

PER CURIAM.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

9 FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

10

11 AMBER JACKSON-BOYD, No. 2:25-cv-00674-DC-AC

12 Plaintiff,

13 v. ORDER GRANTING THE MOTION TO

WITHDRAW AS COUNSEL FOR

14 PATRICIA BROWN, et al., PLAINTIFF 15 Defendant. (Doc. No. 10) 16 17 This matter is before the court on the motion to withdraw as Plaintiff's counsel of record 18 filed by attorney Robert Ross Powell on August 25, 2025. (Doc. No. 10.) Pursuant to Local Rule 19 230(g), the pending motion was taken under submission to be decided on the papers. (Doc. No. 20 13.) For the reasons explained below, the court will grant the pending motion to withdraw as 21 counsel.

22 LEGAL STANDARD

23 An attorney's motion to withdrawal as counsel of record is governed by the Local Rules 24 of this court. Specifically, Local Rule 182 provides as follows: 25 Unless otherwise provided herein, an attorney who has appeared may not withdraw leaving the client in propria persona without leave of 26 court upon noticed motion and notice to the client and all other parties who have appeared. The attorney shall provide an affidavit 27 stating the current or last known address or addresses of the client and the efforts made to notify the client of the motion to withdraw. 28 1 L.R. 182(d). In addition, "[w]ithdrawal as attorney is governed by the Rules of Professional 2 Conduct of the State Bar of California, and the attorney shall conform to the requirements of 3 those Rules." Id.

4 Rule 1.16(a) of the California Rules of Professional Conduct provides several grounds

5 upon which an attorney "shall withdraw from the representation of a client," including if: 6 (1) the lawyer knows or reasonably should know that the client is bringing an action, conducting a defense, asserting a position in 7 litigation, or taking an appeal, without probable cause and for the purpose of harassing or maliciously injuring any person; 8

(2) the lawyer knows or reasonably should know that the

9 representation will result in violation of these rules or of the State Bar Act; 10

(3) the lawyer's mental or physical condition renders it unreasonably

11 difficult to carry out the representation effectively; or 12 (4) the client discharges the lawyer. 13 Cal. R. Prof. Conduct 1.16(a) (emphasis added). 14 In contrast to Rule 1.16(a), a withdrawal based on the grounds listed in Rule 1.16(b) is 15 permissive, not mandatory. Cal. R. Prof. Conduct 1.16(b). Those permissive grounds include to 16 following: 17 (1) the client insists upon

presenting a claim or defense in litigation, or asserting a position or making a demand in a non-litigation matter, 18 that is not warranted under existing law and cannot be supported by good faith argument for an extension, modification, or reversal of 19 existing law; 20 (2) the client either seeks to pursue a criminal or fraudulent course of conduct or has used the lawyer's services to advance a course of 21 conduct that the lawyer reasonably believes was a crime or fraud; 22 (3) the client insists that the lawyer pursue a course of conduct that is criminal or fraudulent; 23

(4) the client by other conduct renders it unreasonably difficult for

24 the lawyer to carry out the representation effectively; 25 (5) the client breaches a material term of an agreement with, or obligation, to the lawyer relating to the representation, and the lawyer 26 has given the client a reasonable warning after the breach that the lawyer will withdraw unless the client fulfills the agreement or 27 performs the obligation; 28 //// 1 (6) the client knowingly and freely assents to termination of the representation; 2

(7) the inability to work with co-counsel indicates that the best

3 interests of the client likely will be served by withdrawal; 4 (8) the lawyer's mental or physical condition renders it difficult for the lawyer to carry out the representation effectively; 5

(9) a continuation of the representation is likely to result in a violation

6 of these rules or the State Bar Act; or 7 (10) the lawyer believes in good faith, in a proceeding pending before a tribunal, that the tribunal will find the existence of other good cause 8 for withdrawal. 9 Cal. R. Prof. Conduct 1.16(b). 10 For permissive withdrawals, the decision to grant or deny an attorney's motion to 11 withdraw is committed to the discretion of the trial court. "In ruling on a motion to withdraw as 12 counsel, courts consider: (1) the reasons why withdrawal is sought; (2) the prejudice withdrawal 13 may cause to other litigants; (3) the harm withdrawal might cause to the administration of justice; 14 and (4) the degree to which withdrawal will delay the resolution of the case." *Beard v. 15 Shuttermart of Cal., Inc.*, No. 3:07-cv-00594-WQH-NLS, 2008 WL 410694, at *2 (S.D. Cal. Feb. 16 13, 2008); see also *CE Res., Inc. v. Magellan Grp., LLC*, No. 2:08-cv-02999-MCE-KJM, 2009 17 WL 3367489, at *2 (E.D. Cal. Oct. 14, 2009) (noting that "[u]ltimately, the court's ruling must 18 involve a balancing of the equities"). 19 For both mandatory and permissive withdrawals, representation shall not be terminated 20 until the attorney "has taken reasonable steps to avoid reasonably foreseeable prejudice to the 21 rights of the client, such as giving the client sufficient notice to permit the client to retain other 22 counsel." Cal. R. Prof. Conduct 1.16(d).

23 ANALYSIS

24 Here, Attorney Powell moves to withdraw as counsel for Plaintiff in this action because 25 "there is a complete breakdown of any sort of workable relationship between Counsel and 26 Client." (Doc. No. 10 at 3.) Attorney Powell explains that "[a]fter months of attempting 27 communications in which significant periods of time would pass without response and there was 28 little to no progress on issues between the parties, it became clear the relationship was 1 unworkable." (Id. at 5.) Consequently, "there has been a fundamental and irreconcilable break- 2

down in the attorney-client relationship.” (Id. at 6.) The pending motion thus seeks permissive 3 withdrawal based on California Rule of Professional Conduct 1.16(b). (Id. at 6–7.) 4 As for the prejudice withdrawal may cause to other parties, the court notes that 5 Defendants did not file an opposition to the pending motion for withdrawal, nor otherwise express 6 concerns regarding prejudice or delay. 7 As for the delay that may be caused by permitting withdrawal, the court notes that this 8 case is still in the early stages of litigation; Defendants filed an answer just a month before the 9 pending motion was filed, and a scheduling order has not yet issued. (See Doc. No. 9, 12.) Thus, 10 granting the pending motion and providing time for Plaintiff to obtain new counsel to represent 11 her in this case will not cause significant delay in resolving this case. 12 Further, Attorney Powell has “taken reasonable steps to avoid reasonably foreseeable 13 prejudice to the rights of [Plaintiff],” by giving Plaintiff ample notice of his intention to file this 14 motion. See Cal. R. Prof. Conduct 1.16(d). Specifically, after many previous unsuccessful 15 discussions, Attorney Powell provided written notice to Plaintiff on June 25, 2025, two months 16 before filing the motion, and on August 15, 2025, Attorney Powell provided Plaintiff with a copy 17 of the motion and his declaration. (Doc. No. 10-1 at ¶¶ 5–6.) 18 Attorney Powell also provided the court with Plaintiff’s last known mailing address and 19 email address, as required by Local Rule 182. (Id. at ¶¶ 3–4.) 20 Having considered the motion and Attorney Powell’s representations, the court finds that 21 the permissive withdrawal sought by counsel is appropriate under Rule 1.16(b). 22 Thus, the pending motion to withdrawal as counsel for Plaintiff will be granted. Plaintiff 23 will be provided thirty (30) days to obtain new counsel to represent her in this action or to inform 24 the court of her intention to proceed pro se in this case.

25 CONCLUSION

26 For the reasons set forth above: 27 1. The motion to withdraw as counsel for Plaintiff (Doc. No. 10) is GRANTED; 28 2. The Clerk of the Court is directed to terminate Robert Ross Powell as the counsel 1 of record for Plaintiff; 2 3. Attorney Powell shall comply with all obligations under Rule 1.16(e) of the 3 California Rules of Professional Conduct regarding release of a client’s papers and 4 property and return of unearned fees, if any; 5 4. Within thirty (30) days from the date of entry of this order, Plaintiff shall file 6 either: (i) a notice of appearance by new counsel obtained to represent her in this 7 action, or (11) a notice informing the court that she will continue prosecuting this 8 action pro se; 9 5. Plaintiff is warned that his failure to comply with this order may result in the court 10 dismissing this action due to her failure to prosecute and failure to comply with the 11 court’s order; 12 6. Plaintiff is substituted in pro se and is directed to comply with all future hearing 13 dates and the rules of the court; 14 7. The Clerk of the Court is directed to enter the following contact information as 15 Plaintiff’s address of record; 16 Amber Jackson-Boyd 24493 Pulliam Rd. 17 Thompsonville, IL 92890 18 littlethundersquaw61 @ yahoo.com 19 8. The Clerk of the Court is directed to serve this order on Plaintiff by mail and by 20 email. 21 09 IT IS SO ORDERED. □

23 | Dated: _ November 25, 2025 IVs Os Dena Coggins 24 United States District Judge 25 26 27
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