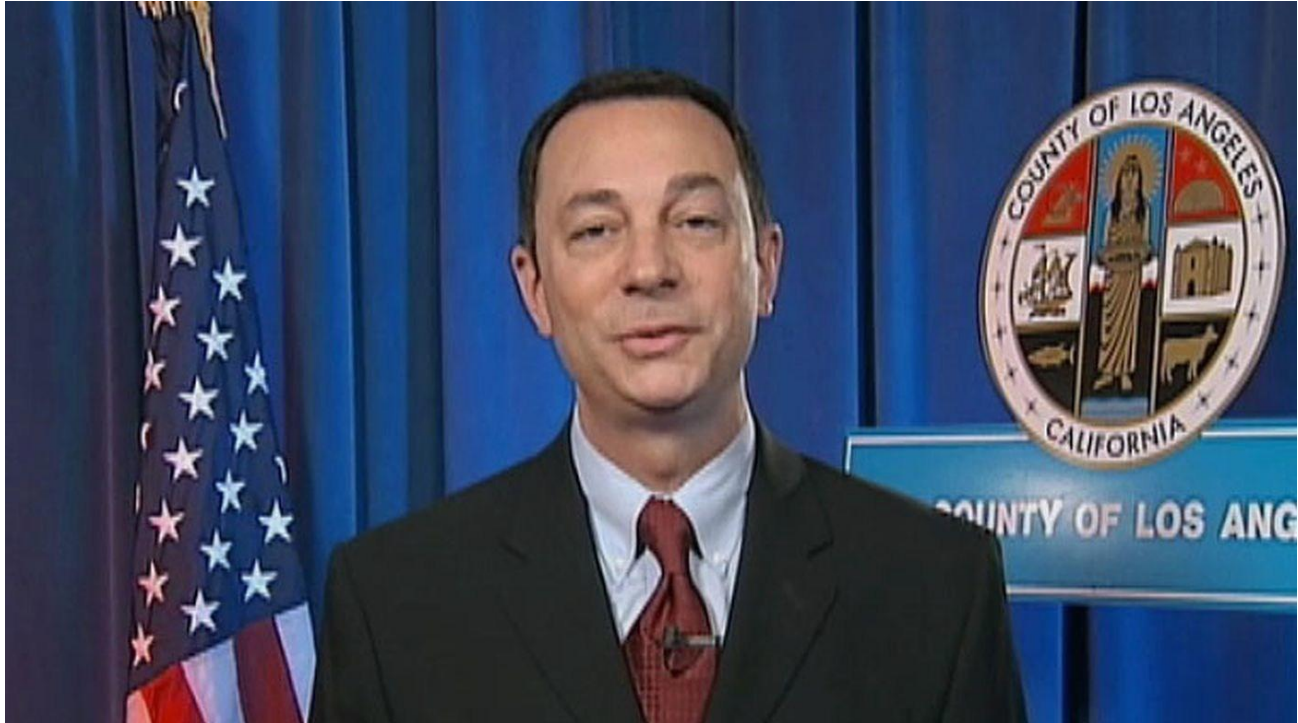


# Judge dismisses lawsuit brought by former top attorney against L.A. County

 [latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-county-counsel-lawsuit-20180124-story.html](https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-county-counsel-lawsuit-20180124-story.html)

By Melissa Etehad



Mark Saladino had contended that he was ousted as county counsel for trying to prevent misconduct by the Board of Supervisors. (Los Angeles County)

A judge has dismissed a wrongful termination lawsuit brought by the former top attorney for Los Angeles County, who alleged that the Board of Supervisors removed him in retaliation for him raising concerns about alleged illegal activity committed by the board.

L.A. County Superior Court Judge Joanne O'Donnell threw out the lawsuit filed by Mark Saladino, who previously served as county treasurer and tax collector before starting to work as county counsel in October 2014.

O'Donnell found that Saladino failed to prove that the board ousted him in retaliation for complaining about misconduct. Saladino also failed to present evidence "of any outrageous or extreme conduct" by the board during negotiations to reassign him after he was ousted as county counsel in June 2015, O'Donnell said.

Saladino, who retired in 2016, said in a statement that he was "surprised and disappointed by the ruling."

Saladino's lawsuit alleged that supervisors violated the state's open meetings law on multiple occasions and attempted to overstep their authority on matters like regulating county jails.

The suit also alleged that Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, in particular, had resented Saladino because the lawyer had resisted Ridley-Thomas' attempts to use taxpayer funds to steer contracts to "unqualified law firms," potentially violating conflict-of-interest law.

And it contended that Ridley-Thomas had led a purge of county officials seen as too close to former Chief Executive William T Fujioka, including Saladino.

Lawyers representing the county and the board argued that the supervisors decided to remove Saladino because they had lost confidence in him.

"This is a client's right," said Skip Miller, a private attorney representing the Board of Supervisors in the case. "We always thought this lawsuit was sour grapes and appreciate the court's decision."

When Saladino was ousted as county counsel, he was sent back to the Department of Treasurer and Tax Collector, but with a demotion to third in command.

Lawyers for the county argued that Saladino had not complained about his removal and reassignment and that he had not been threatened.

The judge agreed and said Saladino could have refused to sign his removal and sought a different position but that he admitted it "was the best deal" he "could probably get," O'Donnell ruled in granting the county's motion for a summary judgment.

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