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# **Class Actions**

Our class action attorneys are experienced in successfully handling class action lawsuits, particularly those challenging unconstitutional strip searches. We also handle prisoners' rights lawsuits.

### PRISONERS' RIGHTS

## Tyler v. Suffolk County

In August 2006, we filed a civil rights class action on behalf of about 4,000 inmates who alleged that they were unconstitutionally locked in cells with no toilets and no sinks while they were confined in Building 4 at the Suffolk County House of Correction at South Bay. Plaintiffs said that guards did not always permit them to use the bathroom, so they were forced to urinate and defecate in bags and makeshift containers. As a result, inmates were subjected to the stench of their own bodily wastes and were forced to sleep in close quarters with others resorting to such means. The defendants were Sheriff Andrea J. Cabral and House of Correction Superintendent Gerard Horgan. The class included people who were housed in Building 4 at South Bay any time from August 3, 2003, to February 7, 2008.

Defendants agreed to settle this lawsuit for 1.5 million dollars. Class members who submitted a valid Claim Form received a payment. It is now too late to file a claim. The settlement money is shared according to a formula, after payment of bonuses to class representatives, bonuses for class members who had depositions taken and attorneys' fees and costs. Class members who filed a claim received approximately \$4.12 for each day they spent in Building 4 during the class period. Because of the terrific response rate in this case, this amount is slightly lower than the original estimate of five dollars per day. The Court granted final approval of the settlement on October 20, 2010.

## Garvey v. Macdonald

In March 2007, we filed a civil rights class action alleging unconstitutional strip searches at the Franklin County Jail and House of Correction. Class representative Gregory Garvey alleged that 486 class members were illegally strip searched by corrections officers who had no reason to suspect they were in possession of drugs, weapons, or other contraband. The defendants were Franklin County Sheriff Frederick B. Macdonald and Special Sheriff Superintendent Forbes Byron, the people responsible for the policy. The class included people strip searched at Franklin County Jail after March 28, 2004, and before February 25, 2007. On October 22, 2009, the judge ruled that the strip search policy at the old jail was unconstitutional. The judge granted final approval to a settlement on January 14, 2011. On behalf of all defendants, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts agreed to pay more than \$1.16 million to settle the case.

There was an excellent response rate in this case. Class members who submitted a timely claim form received a payment of approximately \$2,800.

You can read the court opinion finding the policy was unconstitutional here.

## Mack v. Suffolk County

We secured a \$10 million settlement on behalf of a class of about 5,400 women who were illegally strip searched. For nearly a decade, the Boston Police Department sent female detainees to the Suffolk County Jail where they were routinely strip searched as part of the admissions procedure. Male detainees were held in police station lockups, where they were not routinely strip searched.

Attorneys Howard Friedman and Myong Joun handled this complex case through two attempted appeals by the defendants. They won class certification and a judgment that the policy was unconstitutional, Mack v. Suffolk County, 191 F.R.D. 16 (D. Mass. 2000). Finally, after over four years of litigation, the defendants agreed to settle. When the time came to pay, Suffolk County claimed it could not pay its portion of the settlement as agreed. We obtained a court order holding the county in contempt of court and assessing a fine until payment was made. Finally, Suffolk County paid its share of the settlement plus more than \$250,000 in interest and fines. In addition, Suffolk County changed its policy, and the City of Boston built a lockup for female detainees. Furthermore, police training regarding strip searches was increased throughout the state, and other agencies changed their strip search policies to comply with constitutional requirements.

#### Ryan v. Garvey

In January 2005, we filed a civil rights class action alleging unconstitutional strip searches at the Hampshire Jail and House of Corrections. The plaintiffs alleged that 89 class members were illegally strip

searched at the Hampshire County Jail after their arrest, or after a finding of civil contempt. The defendants are Robert Garvey, the Hampshire Sheriff, and Patrick J. Callihane, the Deputy Superintendent responsible for operation of the Hampshire Jail and House of Correction. In 2007, the Hampshire Sheriff agreed to pay \$205,000 to settle the case.

Nilsen v. York County

Attorney Howard Friedman, along with co-counsel David Webbert of Augusta, Maine, reached a settlement agreement of \$3.3 million in a class action alleging the unconstitutional strip searches of men and women in York County, Maine. The lawsuit, which represented a class of over 7,600 people, said that the jail's procedure for changing prisoners in jail uniforms and the "clothing search" was actually an illegal strip search. As part of the settlement, York County enacted a new policy protecting the privacy of pretrial detainees during the jail's changeover process. The judge granted final approval of the settlement in September 2005. You can read the Court's decision here.

Connor v. Plymouth County

We reached a settlement agreement of \$1.35 million in a class action alleging the unconstitutional strip search of women in Plymouth County, Massachusetts. The lawsuit said that women were strip searched without cause at the regional detention facility at the Marshfield Police Station and before bail hearings held at the Plymouth County Correctional Facility. The court granted final approval of the settlement in March 2004.

#### **CONSUMERS' RIGHTS**

Ferrara v. Toyota

We are local counsel in a class action lawsuit against Toyota for distributing vehicles with defective parts that made them susceptible to accidents. This action was brought on behalf of all people in Massachusetts who owned or leased a Toyota vehicle during the class period.

Herman v. Staples

Howard Friedman, as co-lead class counsel in this consumer class action, reached a settlement on behalf of consumers in a suit alleging that Staples failed to comply with Massachusetts' item pricing law.

#### **FOURTH AMENDMENT**

Ocasio v. City of Lawrence

Howard Friedman, along with counsel from Merrimack Valley Legal Services, represented a class of people in Lawrence, Massachusetts, whose welfare cards were illegally seized by Lawrence police officers acting pursuant to a policy of the Mayor. The plaintiffs won a court order declaring the policy unconstitutional and ending the illegal practice. You can read the court's opinion here.

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