

**JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS**

455 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, California 94102-3688

Report

TO: Members of the Judicial Council

FROM: Civil and Small Claims Advisory Committee
Hon. Lee Smalley Edmon, Chair
Susan R. McMullan, Senior Attorney, 415-865-7990,
susan.mcmullan@jud.ca.gov

DATE: August 12, 2008

SUBJECT: Class Actions: Entry of Judgment Following Final Approval of Settlement
(amend Cal. Rules of Court, rules 3.769 and 3.770) (Action Required)

Issue Statement

Rule 3.769 of the California Rules of Court addresses court approval of class action settlements. Under subdivision (h) of that rule, if a court approves settlement and enters judgment, it is required to retain jurisdiction to enforce the terms of the judgment. Following final court approval of a class settlement and entry of judgment, in some cases parties have asked the court to enter dismissal as well. There is no authority, however, for both entry of judgment following settlement and entry of dismissal. In the circumstances of a class settlement, the entry of dismissal, governed by rule 3.770, may be inconsistent with a judgment.

Recommendation

The Civil and Small Claims Advisory Committee recommends that the Judicial Council, effective January 1, 2009, amend rules 3.769 and 3.770 of the California Rules of Court to provide that on the approval of a class settlement and entry of judgment, a court may not also enter dismissal of the action.

The text of amended rules 3.769 and 3.770 is attached at page 4.

Rationale for Recommendation

Rule 3.769 governs settlement of class actions. It requires a hearing and court approval of any settlement. (Cal Rules of Court, rule 3.769(a).) Subdivision (h) provides as follows:

If the court approves the settlement agreement after the final approval hearing, the court must make and enter judgment. The judgment must

include a provision for the retention of the court's jurisdiction over the parties to enforce the terms of the judgment.

Thus, the final settlement of a case with class action allegations includes court approval of the class settlement, entry of judgment, and retention of jurisdiction to enforce it. In some cases, in addition to entry of judgment, the defendant, or both sides, requests the court to enter dismissal. This is reportedly commonly done and some judges have expressed concern that settlement of the case and dismissal of the class claims are inconsistent.

The rules on settlement and dismissal of class actions do not address the situation of concurrent entry of judgment and dismissal.¹ Staff has found no case law either approving or disapproving the entry of judgment after approval of a class settlement with the retention of jurisdiction to enforce the judgment and the concurrent dismissal of a class action. A set of uniform statewide rules for class actions, of which these rules are a part, was adopted by the council, effective January 1, 2002. Neither the advisory committee materials, nor the council report addressing the class action rules from that time, discuss any interplay between entry of judgment following settlement approval with retention of jurisdiction and entry of dismissal.

Retention of jurisdiction to enforce a settlement in a non-class action case is governed by Code of Civil Procedure section 664.6. It provides that a court may retain jurisdiction to enforce the terms of a settlement if the parties stipulate to the settlement, either in writing or orally before the court, and ask the court to retain jurisdiction to enforce its terms while the case is still pending. In addition, case law has clarified that the court may both retain jurisdiction to enforce the terms of the settlement and enter dismissal. (See *Wackeen v. Malis* (1992) 97 Cal.App.4th 429, 439 ["We construe the second sentence of section 664.6 to mean, and we so hold, that even though a settlement may call for a case to be dismissed, or the plaintiff may dismiss the suit of its own accord, the court may nevertheless retain jurisdiction to enforce the terms of the settlement, until such time as all of its terms have been performed by the parties, if the parties have requested this specific retention of jurisdiction"].)

The court's holding in *Wackeen, supra*, has not been applied to a class settlement in a published opinion. Unlike a nonrepresentative action, in a class action, because of the need to protect the absent class members who did not participate in settlement negotiations, the settlement terms are reflected in the judgment when the court approves the class settlement, and it is not necessary in a class settlement for the parties to ask the court to retain jurisdiction to enforce the court-approved settlement terms. (Cal Rules of Court, rule 3.769(h) ["The judgment must include a provision for the retention of the

¹ Rule 3.679, which governs settlement, does not address dismissal. Rule 3.770 requires court approval of a dismissal and, if the class has been certified, notice to the class.

court’s jurisdiction over the parties to enforce the terms of the judgment.”]) Moreover, a typical nonrepresentative action does not require court approval of a settlement because all the parties to the settlement are before the court and their settlement may be enforced as any other private contractual agreement may be enforced.

The purpose of requiring court approval of a class settlement and court approval of the dismissal of a class action is to protect the interests of the class and its members. (See *La Sala v. American Sav. & Loan Assn.* (1971) 5 Cal.3d 864, 871; *In re Microsoft I-V Cases* (2006) 135 Cal.App.4th 706, 723 (citing *Dunk v. Ford Motor Co.* (1996) 48 Cal.App.4th 1794, 1800–1801).) Rules prohibiting the concurrent entry of judgment following settlement with retention of jurisdiction and entry of dismissal will advance this purpose.

Alternative Actions Considered

Rules 3.769 and 3.770 could remain unchanged. As acknowledged above, it is not known how often courts are asked to concurrently enter judgment following final approval of a class settlement and dismiss the action.

Alternatively, rule 3.769(h) could be amended to explicitly authorize the entry of dismissal in a case in which the court has entered judgment, with retention of jurisdiction to enforce the judgment, following settlement approval. The Civil and Small Claims Advisory Committee believes these actions are inconsistent and recommended circulation of this proposal to prohibit it. Because commentators agreed with the proposal, the committee does not recommend this alternative.

Comments From Interested Parties

This proposal was circulated during the spring 2008 comment cycle. Five organizations submitted comments. All agreed with the proposed amendments. The State Bar of California Committee on Administration of Justice (CAJ) commented that there is confusion in the legal community about whether a dismissal can be entered along with the entry of judgment on final approval of a class settlement, even though this may result in an inconsistency between the judgment and the dismissal. CAJ noted that the proposal clears up the confusion. One commentator, a superior court judicial attorney, also noted that a dismissal concurrent with or after the final approval of a settlement is inconsistent with judgment and retention of jurisdiction. A chart summarizing the comments and the committee’s response to each is attached at pages 5–6.

Implementation Requirements and Costs

The proposal clarifies an area of class action procedure. There are no implementation requirements and it will result in no costs.

Attachments

Rules 3.769 and 3.770 of the California Rules of Court are amended, effective January 1, 2009, to read:

1 **Rule 3.769. Settlement of class actions**

2
3 (a)–(g) * * *

4
5 (h) **Judgment and retention of jurisdiction to enforce**

6
7 If the court approves the settlement agreement after the final approval
8 hearing, the court must make and enter judgment. The judgment must
9 include a provision for the retention of the court’s jurisdiction over the
10 parties to enforce the terms of the judgment. The court may not enter an
11 order dismissing the action at the same time as, or after, entry of
12 judgment.

13
14
15 **Rule 3.770. Dismissal of class actions**

16
17 (a) **Court approval of dismissal**

18
19 A dismissal of an entire class action, or of any party or cause of action in a
20 class action, requires court approval. The court may not grant a request to
21 dismiss a class action if the court has entered judgment following final
22 approval of a settlement. Requests for dismissal must be accompanied by a
23 declaration setting forth the facts on which the party relies. The declaration
24 must clearly state whether consideration, direct or indirect, is being given for
25 the dismissal and must describe the consideration in detail.

26
27 (b)–(c) * * *

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All comments are verbatim unless indicated by an asterisk (*).

	Commentator	Position	Comment	Committee Response
1.	Orange County Bar Association Cathrine Castaldi, President	A	No specific comments.	No response required.
2.	State Bar of California, Committee on Administration of Justice Saul Bercovitz Staff Attorney	A	There is some confusion in the legal community about whether a dismissal can be entered in conjunction with the entry of judgment upon final approval of a class action settlement. In certain situations, the parties to a class action settlement request that the court enter a dismissal at the time of the entry of judgment or subsequent to the entry of judgment, following the final approval of a class action settlement, even though there are times when this may result in an inconsistency between the judgment and the dismissal. This proposal clears up that confusion and makes it certain that when a judgment is entered after final approval of a class action settlement, a dismissal may not be entered concurrent with or after the entry of such a judgment.	The committee notes the commentator's agreement.
3.	Superior Court of Los Angeles County	A	No specific comments.	No response required.
4.	Superior Court of San Bernardino County Debra Meyers	A	Once the case settles and is given final approval, a judgment to that effect is currently mandated and the court must retain jurisdiction to enforce its terms. CRC 3.769(h). A dismissal concurrent therewith or thereafter is inconsistent with judgment and retained jurisdiction.	The committee notes the commentator's agreement.
5.	Superior Court of San Diego County Michael M. Roddy	A	No specific comments.	No response required.

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	Commentator	Position	Comment	Committee Response
	Executive Officer			