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CONSUMER ALERT: Texas Families in Estate Disputes – Beware of Predatory Lawyers

Stop Legal Bullying Now, LLC

March 17, 2026 • 4 min read



Stop Legal Bullying Now, LLC

One family's experience with attorneys Nick Abaza, Jorge Borunda, and Michael Trevino offers a cautionary example for Texas consumers navigating probate and estate disputes.

Houston, TX, March 17, 2026 ([GLOBE NEWSWIRE](#)) -- [Stop Legal Bullying Now, LLC](#) today announced that Texans navigating estate and probate disputes during moments of grief and vulnerability are warned to proceed with extreme caution when hiring legal counsel, especially when contracts include mandatory arbitration clauses that eliminate the right to a jury trial, according to one Texas family.

The warning comes as the investigative team at [Dolcefino Media](#) today released [Damn Lawyers](#), a detailed look into how one family's inheritance story tells a cautionary tale about predatory lawyers motivated by greed, coercive legal tactics, and how arbitration can shield attorneys from accountability.

Caroline and Richard Allison, siblings who lost their father after a long battle with dementia, were seeking clarity and protection regarding their father's estate. Instead, they say, they were pressured into high-stakes litigation by their lawyers Nick Abaza, Jorge Borunda and Michael Trevino, that ultimately benefited their pockets more than the Allison's.

The Allisons say their experience highlights risk many families don't discover until it's too late, including:

- Being pressured into litigation without being apprised of every potential downside
- Coercion tactics by attorneys to convince clients to sign costly contingency agreements. In the Allison case, this fee arrangement would ultimately ensure their lawyers received a higher percentage of their father's estate than they would.
- Losing access to your first amendment right to a fair trial through mandatory arbitration clauses buried in legal agreements

According to the investigation, the Allisons say they were pressured to pursue aggressive legal action against their stepmom without being fully informed that:

- The trust structure their attorneys told them to challenge actually protected their family from severe tax consequences
- A loss in a trial could permanently erase not only their inheritance, but future generations' rights to the estate

"Families assume their lawyers are protecting them," said Caroline Allison. "We didn't realize until much later that their interests had nothing to do with our well-being, and everything to do with how much money they could take from my dad's trust."

The dispute eventually led the Allisons to file a legal malpractice claim against Nick Abaza, Jorge Borunda and Michael Trevino, but due to a binding, hidden mandatory arbitration clause, their claim never reached a jury.

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Court Kills Biden-Era Fiduciary Rule



Alex Wong/Getty Images

Diana Britton

March 17, 2026 • 2 min read



You can find original article here [WealthManagement](#). Subscribe to our free daily [WealthManagement newsletters](#).

A U.S. District Court issued a final judgment Tuesday vacating the Department of Labor’s fiduciary rule and related prohibited transaction exemptions that were finalized under the Biden administration.

The Texas District Court decision represents a win for several industry groups that originally [filed the lawsuit](#) seeking to throw the rule out, including the National Association of Insurance and Financial Advisors, the American Council of Life Insurers, the Insured Retirement Institute, Finseca and the National Association for Fixed Annuities.

“Retirement savers are best served by policies that protect consumers while preserving choice and access to financial professionals—not regulatory overreach that reduces their options,” according to a joint statement by NAIFA, ACLI and the other parties to the lawsuit. “Consumers already benefit from strong protections at both the state and federal levels, including enhanced annuity best interest standards adopted by most states and federal requirements governing investment advice. These frameworks protect consumers while preserving access to information and guidance about annuities—the only product available in the financial marketplace that acts like a pension by guaranteeing lifetime income.”

The Financial Services Institute and SIFMA, which were plaintiffs-intervenors in the lawsuit, also issued a joint statement:



“The order ensures that financial advisors can continue to provide the services best suited for each individual client. The 2024 rule was materially indistinguishable from a 2016 DOL rule that was struck down by the Fifth Circuit in 2018,” the groups said. “As we explained in our complaint, ‘[I]ike the 2016 Rule, the 2024 Rule is inconsistent with the common law, contravenes the statutory text and impermissibly attempts to regulate the provision of services to accounts over which the Labor Department has no regulatory authority. Indeed, the illegality of the 2024 Rule is even clearer today.’”

This follows a [move in November by the DOL to dismiss](#) its appeal of a Texas district court decision to pause the 2024 rule.

The Biden administration’s [Labor Department unveiled its iteration](#) of a fiduciary rule in October 2023, with President Joe Biden framing the rule as a way to curb so-called “junk fees” in the form of high (and potentially unsuitable) commissions in retirement advice. The final rule was [released in April 2024 and was slated to take effect in September 2024](#).

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'I have lost nearly everything': My mother's trustee changed her \$1 million will and my attorney fleeced me. What can I do?

Quentin Fottrell

March 12, 2026 • 9 min read



"When this lawsuit began, I had over \$50,000 in the bank and excellent credit. Now I sleep on the floor of my aunt's storage bedroom." (Photo subject is a model.) - Getty Images

Dear Quentin,

I'm the beneficiary of a gift from my mother, but I haven't been able to receive it even though it has been over two and a half years since she died.

Before my mother died, the trustee isolated her from friends and family and had her change her will. Instead of receiving my half of the estate outright, as originally intended, I was to receive only a monthly allowance and health insurance based on the new documents. Even then, the trustee did not follow the amended trust. She paid herself and ignored me, leaving me no choice but to file suit.

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I filed claims for breach of fiduciary duty and undue influence. My attorney, who described himself as a minister doing “God’s work,” had me sign a 40% contingency agreement and assured me that I shouldn’t worry because the trustee would ultimately pay the fees.

The case dragged on with repeated delays. When the lawsuit began, I had over \$50,000 in savings and excellent credit. Now I sleep on the floor of my aunt’s storage bedroom while waiting for some kind of resolution. I repeatedly asked my attorney to request a predistribution from the trust, but he always had an excuse. Eventually he said he would request one only as part of a new deal in which he would take up to 70% of whatever I received to cover his so-called hard-money costs.

Nearly two years after my mother died — and after the trustee had spent around \$350,000 in legal fees — we went to arbitration over her use of trust funds. We won. She was ordered to repay those fees, though she doesn’t appear to have the money to do so. I believed the case might finally move toward settlement.

Instead, the trustee filed an appeal on the 31st day after a 30-day deadline. Under Florida statutes it appeared to be late, so I expected it to be dismissed. However, my attorney refused to respond to the petition unless I agreed to renegotiate his compensation. It felt like extortion.

Comments by the judge

When we couldn’t come to terms, a withdrawal hearing was held. During that hearing the judge suggested I make an offer that would be advantageous for my attorney, noting that he had a wife and children to support. The judge was unaware of the pressure my attorney had been placing on me.

Afterward, my attorney filed to withdraw. I sent a letter to the judge explaining the situation and copied all parties to avoid ex parte communication. The judge’s assistant initially confirmed it had been submitted for review, but weeks later I was told the judge could not accept personal emails. My letter and the withdrawal notice were never formally filed, yet the withdrawal was suddenly granted and a \$240,000 lien was placed on my case.

[Story Continues](#)

AP

A bipartisan group of 13 attorneys general sues OneMain over hidden loan add-ons

KEN SWEET

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NEW YORK (AP) — A bipartisan group of 13 attorneys general sued the financial company OneMain Financial on Monday, alleging the company placed unwanted additional products and other hidden costs on its loans that led to higher costs for its borrowers.

The lawsuit, filed in New York on Monday, says OneMain employees steered borrowers into purchasing credit insurance and other loan-related products while making deceptive claims about whether the products were required and how they could be canceled. The attorneys general say the conduct affected tens of thousands of borrowers and violated state consumer protection laws.

The products include credit insurance, which claims to pay the loan if a consumer dies or becomes unemployed, as well as products like home and auto memberships that are similar to AAA. These companies are, in turn, owned by OneMain through a related company.

These products increase the cost of the loan. The lawsuit alleges that OneMain does not check whether the consumer may already have a home or auto membership service through AAA as well.

“OneMain targets people who are already struggling financially, saddling them with hidden fees and misleading loans to trap them in even more debt,” New York State Attorney General Letitia James said in a statement.


OneMain said the practices involved with the lawsuit were already reviewed with the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau in 2023. In that settlement, OneMain agreed to repay \$10 million to consumers and pay \$10 million in fines and penalties for allegedly selling add-on products to consumers.

“The states’ allegations are simply untrue -- their case is wrong on the facts and wrong on the law and attempts to re-litigate issues that were already reviewed by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and fully resolved. We will litigate this case vigorously and look forward to proving the truth in court.”

OneMain, based in Evansville, Indiana, is one of the largest U.S. non-bank installment lenders. It primarily offers loans to those with subprime credit scores, meaning much of its customers are already financially struggling when they come to OneMain.

Along with New York, the other Attorneys General joining the lawsuit include the states of Colorado, Nevada, Maryland, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Washington, Wisconsin, New Jersey, South Dakota, and New Hampshire as well as the Commonwealths of Virginia and Pennsylvania.

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 **USA TODAY**

The great wealth transfer is giving Americans another reason to argue

Medora Lee, USA TODAY

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Americans have a new beef – a legal one, that is.

As more than 11,000 baby boomers now turn 65 years old every day, approximately \$124 trillion is expected to shift to younger generations and charities through 2048, according to Cerulli and Associates. Even with financial advisers helping Americans prepare both boomers and heirs for the largest wealth transfer in history, more disputes are arising, data show.

Between 2020 and 2024, the number of probate and estate cases entering state courts rose about 32%, based on data from 39 states, according to the independent nonprofit [National Center for State Courts](#).

Much of the increase is tied directly to the massive intergenerational wealth transfer, experts said. As assets shift to Gen X, millennials and Gen Z, planning gaps are turning into lawsuits, hurting relationships and eating into inheritances, they said.

“Traditionally, wealth moves from one spouse to the survivor and then to the kids,” said Scott Rahn, attorney and founding partner at RMO LLP. “But now, things are complicated with blended families and nontraditional families.”

The rise of [401\(k\)s](#) also has complicated inheritances because they have very specific rules, he said. By federal law, spouses automatically inherit 401(k)s.

However, [if an ex-spouse remains listed](#) as the 401(k) beneficiary, they may legally inherit the funds even if they waived their rights to it in a divorce settlement. The estate may be able to sue the ex-spouse for the funds but only *after* distribution in some jurisdictions.

Whoever inherits the 401(k) can legally change the beneficiaries, which means your retirement savings may end up with someone you didn't intend to have it.

Why can't we get along?

Many issues can arise in blended or nontraditional families because laws tend to favor nuclear, biological and marital relationships, and often exclude stepchildren and unmarried partners.

More than half of all Americans have either been or will be included in a blended family during their lifetimes, with 1,300 new stepfamilies forming every day, according to nonprofit [The Stepfamily Foundation](#).

Stepchildren are not automatically considered legal [heirs](#) unless they are legally adopted, so they must be specifically named in estate planning documents or risk being unintentionally disinherited.

Disputes also can arise because of perceived favoritism between biological and non-biological children and surviving spouses and children, experts said.





A huge transfer of wealth is underway as Boomers age.

How much do poor planning and disagreements cost?

Just having to go through [probate](#), a legal process that distributes a dead person's assets and settles their debts, can take many months and cost thousands of dollars.

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