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Elizabeth Cabraser Tapped to Lead VW Consumer Litigation

By Sara Randazzo



Rubie McCoy, left, a plaintiff in a lawsuit filed against Morgan Stanley, reacts while describing her housing situation during a news conference, Monday, Oct. 15, 2012 in New York. With her is attorney Elizabeth Cabraser.

Associated Press

A familiar face in the plaintiffs' bar has been chosen from an army of potential candidates to lead the consumer litigation facing Volkswagen over its diesel emissions scandal.

San Francisco-based Elizabeth Cabraser will head a 22-lawyer committee tasked with helping broker a resolution between Volkswagen and thousands of consumers who say they were duped into buying pollutant-spewing vehicles, according to a Thursday court order.

U.S. District Court Judge Charles Breyer in San Francisco, who is overseeing the consolidation of roughly 500 lawsuits against the German automaker, appointed the committee just hours after hearing pitches from more than 100 lawyers in a standing-room-only hearing.

The court received 150 applications from lawyers angling for a role in the case, Judge Breyer said in the order.

The cases have been consolidated through a process called multi-district litigation, which aims to streamline the time-intensive litigation process and often leads to a nationwide settlement.

Those selected to assist Ms. Cabraser—a class-action veteran who has played a lead role in 17 other multi-district litigations, including those involving defective Takata airbags and the BP Gulf oil spill—include nationally known litigators like [David Boies](#) and Christopher Seeger in New York; Paul Geller in Florida; Steve Berman in Seattle; Michael Hausfeld in Washington, D.C., and Frank Pitre in the San Francisco Bay Area.

A few other well-known names who pitched the judge Thursday didn't make the cut, including former Senator John Edwards, who now has a practice in North Carolina, and John Quinn of Quinn Emanuel Urquhart & Sullivan LLP in Los Angeles.

The committee, which dwarfs in size those that have been formed in similar cases, includes representatives from 12 states and D.C. Judge Breyer said the size “is an appropriate number given the amount of work this litigation may entail and the need for an expeditious resolution of the matter.”

All compensation for the lawyers, Judge Breyer wrote, is ultimately up to him.

Judge Breyer recently named former FBI head Robert S. Mueller III to [serve as a special master in the case](#) to help urge along a speedy resolution. Consumers sued Volkswagen in droves after revelations that approximately 480,000 diesel vehicles sold by the company in the U.S. since 2008 were equipped with software that tricked emissions tests.

Here's the entire list of the lawyers who will be driving the case:

Benjamin Bailey, Bailey and Glasser LLP (Charleston, W. Va.)

Steve Berman, Hagens Berman Sobol Shapiro LLP (Seattle)

David Boies, Boies Schiller and Flexner (Armonk, N.Y.)

Elizabeth Cabraser, Lief Cabraser Heimann & Bernstein LLP (San Francisco)

David Casey Jr., Casey Gerry Schenk Francavilla Blatt & Penfield LLP (San Diego)

James Cecchi, Carella Byrne Cecchi Olstein Brody & Agnello P.C. (Roseland, N.J.)

Roxanne Barton, Conlin Roxanne Conlin and Associates (Des Moines, Iowa)

Jayne Conroy, Simmons Hanly Conroy LLC (New York, N.Y.)

Paul Geller, Robbins Geller Rudman and Dowd LLP (Boca Raton, Fla.)

Robin Greenwald, Weitz & Luxenberg P.C. (New York, N.Y.)

Michael Hausfeld, Hausfeld LLP (Washington, D.C.)

Michael Heygood, Heygood, Orr, Pearson (Irving, Texas)

Adam Levitt, Grant & Eisenhofer P.A. (Chicago)

W. Daniel “Dee” Miles III, Beasley Allen Crow Methvin Portis & Miles (Montgomery, Ala.)

Frank Pitre, Cotchett Pitre & McCarthy LLP (Burlingame)

Joseph Rice, Motley Rice LLC (Mt. Pleasant, S.C.)

Rosemary Rivas, Finkelstein Thompson LLP (San Francisco)

Lynn Sarko, Keller Rohrback LLP (Seattle)

Christopher Seeger, Seeger Weiss LLP (New York, N.Y.)

J. Gerard Stranch IV, Branstetter, Stranch & Jennings PLLC (Nashville)

Roland Tellis, Baron Budd PC (Encino, Calif.)

Lesley Weaver, Block & Leviton LLP (Oakland, Calif.)

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