

## Top Plaintiff Lawyers 2022



### Christopher B. Dolan

DOLAN LAW FIRM

SAN FRANCISCO

PERSONAL INJURY,  
EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION  
& HARASSMENT,  
ELDER & DEPENDENT ABUSE  
& WRONGFUL DEATH

**C**hristopher B. Dolan founded the Dolan Law Firm in 1995 and funded its immediate expansion by winning \$2.495 million in his first case. His client was a man injured in a motorcycle accident.

He now has 17 lawyers on the payroll and new offices in Los Angeles and Redondo Beach. Dolan retains a scrappy attitude that has him representing difficult clients in hard-to-win cases.

“Los Angeles [plaintiff] lawyers take cases they know will get them a big number,” he said. “They tell me, ‘Go for the dollar,’ and I say, ‘You take the dollar, I’ll make change.’”

In May 2022, Dolan was representing another biker client, this one a military veteran and former heroin addict nicknamed Gonzo who lost his lower left leg in a collision a block from the courthouse. The bench trial remained unresolved as this account went to press, but Dolan was upbeat about his chances, despite defense claims his client had drugs in his system—drugs that Dolan contends came from the strong painkillers administered by emergency medical technicians after the crash. *Gonzalez v. Smith et al.*, CGC-20-582006 (S.F. Super. Ct., filed Jan. 6, 2021).

“I’ll be asking for five to ten million dollars,” Dolan said.

Dolan said he chafed during the pandemic when trials were scarce due to courthouse closures. “I was bored, so I took a case up in Washington state.”

It was an excessive use of force case over a small-town police shooting of two unarmed men driving a small UTV on railroad tracks in the snow. Dolan said he took the case on a Thursday and had to be ready for trial the following Monday. Despite the obstacles—his clients had had many beers before the shooting—he won a \$3.257 million federal jury verdict in September 2021. *Rice v. City of Roy*, 3:20-cv-05223 (D. Wash., filed March 11, 2020).

He has since obtained \$900,000 in attorney fees and costs, he said.

Dolan said he used photos of footprints in the snow to persuade jurors that the officer who shot the men deliberately placed himself in the path of their vehicle to justify firing at them after they had evaded his effort to pull them over. In court, he used accident reconstructionists plus police procedure and ballistics experts to show the officer violated the department’s use of force and pursuit policies.

“Our theory was that he ambushed them out of a bruised ego,” Dolan said. “He lay in wait and blindsided them and fired two shots into their front windshield.”

— JOHN ROEMER