

# Fired former San Diego prosecutor Marlea Dell'Anno nets almost \$6 million from city for damages, attorney fees

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Earlier this year, a [jury awarded \\$3.9 million](#) to former San Diego assistant city attorney Marlea Dell'Anno for being wrongfully fired.

City Attorney Mara Elliott [vowed to appeal](#), and the jury award kept growing, along with legal fees. By October, Dell'Anno attorney Joshua Gruenberg suggested the city resolve the case by paying a combined \$5,875,000 for damages, lawyer fees and court costs by Nov. 30.

The city agreed but never cut a check, Gruenberg said.

Dell'Anno's lawyer said he updated his request to \$5,928,500 if the city agreed to pay by Dec. 15, and late last week he picked up the check from City Hall.

“At trial, over six weeks the city presented distortions or half-truths about Marlea,” Gruenberg said. “We are thankful to the jury for seeing through that. We are happy to put this case behind us, especially in time for the holidays.”

The nearly \$6 million payment to Dell'Anno and her lawyer is the latest setback for the City Attorney's Office, which has suffered a series of court losses in recent months.

Through a spokesperson, City Attorney Mara Elliott declined to comment on the legal damages paid to Dell'Anno, or the additional \$53,500 taxpayers had to spend after the city missed the Nov. 30 deadline to which it had previously agreed.

Marlea Dell'Anno's wrongful termination lawsuit has cost the city almost \$6 million.  
(Provided by Josh Gruenberg)

But Dell'Anno, who was fired by former City Attorney Jan Goldsmith in late 2015 for [allegedly mishandling files](#), said she was thankful that jurors believed her and other witnesses when her case was tried earlier this year.

“After a brutal seven-year battle, I look forward to closing this chapter of my life with humility and hope for the future,” said Dell’Anno, who is now in private practice.

“While I am deeply grateful to my attorneys and to the judge who presided over my trial, there will never be sufficient words of gratitude for the jury who gave me back my good name,” she said.

Dell’Anno arrived at the San Diego City Attorney’s Office in 2009 after stints as both a public defender and prosecutor in Central California. She led the domestic-violence unit before being named assistant city attorney in charge of criminal prosecutions.

By 2015, however, Dell’Anno ran afoul of Goldsmith, the former judge and state lawmaker who was then in the second of his two four-year terms as San Diego’s city attorney.

She was terminated late that year, allegedly for botching scores of cases, many by missing deadlines for prosecuting domestic-violence suspects after removing files from the office.

[Dell’Anno sued the city](#) and Goldsmith in early 2017, accusing her former boss of using the file-handling charges as a pretext to fire her after she refused to prosecute two cases she said were politically motivated.

One of those cases involved a mentally ill man who spat at a police officer; the other related to Cory Briggs, a well-known San Diego lawyer who has repeatedly sued the city [for open-records violations](#).

Goldsmith denied all of the allegations.