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Brown v. City of Inglewood

Supreme Court of California - July 7, 2025 - P.3d - 2025 WL 1860244

Elected city treasurer brought action against city, its mayor, and city council members, alleging retaliation, in violation of statute providing whistleblower protections to employees, for reporting purported illegal activity.

The Superior Court denied city and its officials' motion to strike complaint under anti-SLAPP statute. On appeal by city and its officials, the Court of Appeal reversed, finding that anti-SLAPP statute applied and that treasurer was not "employee" entitled to whistleblower protections. The Supreme Court granted review.

The Supreme Court held that:

- Whether or not elected officials were included in statutory definition of "employee" for whistleblower statute was unclear from text of statute alone;
- Treasurer was not "employee" entitled to protections of statute; and
- Common law employment test was not applicable to determination of whether statutory definition of "employee" for whistleblower statute included elected officials.

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