

CAA and UTA Settle Lawsuit Over 2015 Agent Defections

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CAA and UTA have settled litigation that erupted after more than a dozen CAA agents defected to UTA in March 2015.

The case filed in the Los Angeles Superior Court's Santa Monica courthouse was withdrawn on Jan. 28, according to court documents.

"The matters were resolved and the state court action, the arbitration and the petitions were all dismissed," said attorney Bryan Freedman, of Freedman and Taitelman, who represented UTA. CAA's suit was handled by Proskauer Rose.

CAA accused UTA of coercing some of the agents to break their existing contracts to make the move, among other charges. UTA fired back with an answer that detailed CAA's long history of recruiting hot-shot agents and clients from rival percenteries. UTA also maintained that the contracts in question were unenforceable.

The case stirred up a flurry of discovery and depositions of top agency honchos including CAA's Richard Lovett, Bryan Lourd and Kevin Huvane.

The industry was rocked on March 31, 2015, when word surfaced that five prominent CAA agents active in the comedy arena — Jason Heyman, Martin Lesak, Greg McKnight, Greg Cavic and Nick Nuciforo — had decamped to UTA that morning (it was a homecoming for Heyman and Lesak who had left UTA to join CAA in 2005). A second wave of CAA reps followed them to UTA the next week.

CAA later called it a "midnight raid" in legal filings. The mass migration from CAA's Century City high rise to UTA's Beverly Hills Post Office compound was a blow to CAA's image as the invincible powerhouse. It also demonstrated the pressures on agencies at a time of great upheaval for media and entertainment.

The issue of companies poaching talent has also reared up on the executive side thanks to Netflix's high volume of recruiting during the past few years. 21st Century Fox filed suit against Netflix last year, accusing Netflix of interference by encouraging executives to break employment contracts. Viacom filed a similar case against the streaming giant last October.

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