



**From:** Alphonse Talarico contact@lawofficeofalphonsetalarico.com    
**Subject:** Draft Third Amended Complaint  
**Date:** June 6, 2022 at 5:14 PM  
**To:** Paul Dulberg Paul\_Dulberg@comcast.net, Paul Dulberg pdulberg@icloud.com

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Dear Mr. Dulberg,

Please see the attached

Thank you,  
Alphonse A. Talarico

Third Amended  
Compl...22.doc  
[74 KB](#)

**THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE TWENTY-SECOND JUDICIAL CIRCUIT  
McHENRY COUNTY, ILLINOIS**

|                                      |   |                   |
|--------------------------------------|---|-------------------|
| PAUL DULBERG,                        | ) |                   |
|                                      | ) |                   |
| Plaintiff,                           | ) |                   |
|                                      | ) |                   |
|                                      | ) |                   |
| v.                                   | ) | Case No. 17LA 377 |
|                                      | ) |                   |
| THE LAW OFFICE OF THOMAS J.          | ) |                   |
| POPOVICH, P.C., HANS MAST            | ) |                   |
| and Thomas J. Popovich, Individually | ) |                   |
|                                      | ) |                   |
| Defendants.                          | ) |                   |

**THIRD AMENDED COMPLAINT AT LAW**

Plaintiff, PAUL DULBERG (hereinafter also referred to as “DULBERG”), by and through his attorney, THE LAW OFFICE OF ALPHONSE A. TALARICO, complaining against THE LAW OFFICES OF THOMAS J. POPOVICH, P.C. (hereinafter also referred to as “POPOVICH”), HANS MAST (hereinafter also referred to as “MAST”), and Thomas J. Popovich, individually as follows:

**LEGAL MALPRACTICE**

**A. Parties and Venue**

1. Paul Dulberg, is a resident of McHenry County, Illinois, and was such a resident at all times complained of herein.
2. The Law Offices of Thomas Popovich, P.C., is a law firm operating in McHenry

County, Illinois, and transacting business on a regular and daily basis in McHenry County, Illinois.

3. Hans Mast was an agent, employee, associate, or shareholder of The Law Offices of Thomas J. Popovich, P.C., and is a licensed attorney in the State of Illinois, and was so licensed at all times relevant to this Third Amended Complaint.

4. Hans Mast is individually liable for his own legal and settlement malpractice done while acting as an agent, employee, associate or shareholder of The Law Offices of Thomas J. Popovich, P.C.

5. As an agent, employee, associate, or shareholder in The Law Offices of Thomas J. Popovich, P.C., The Law Offices of Thomas J. Popovich P.C. is liable for Mast's actions alleged herein.

6. Thomas J. Popovich, at all times relevant herein, was a licensed attorney in the State of Illinois, engaged in the practice of law in McHenry County, Illinois, and a shareholder in The Law Offices of Thomas J. Popovich, P.C.

7. Thomas J. Popovich is individually liable for his own legal and settlement malpractice done while acting as an agent, employee, or shareholder in The Law Offices of Thomas J. Popovich, P.C.

8. As an agent, employee, or shareholder in The Law Offices of Thomas J. Popovich, P.C., The Law Offices of Thomas J. Popovich P.C. is liable for Thomas J. Popovich's actions alleged herein.

9. Venue was therefore claimed proper in McHenry County, Illinois, as the Defendants transact substantial and regular business in and about McHenry County in the practice of law, where their offices are located.

## **B. Relevant Facts**

10. On or about June 28, 2011, Dulberg assisted Caroline McGuire ("Caroline"), William McGuire ("William") (Caroline and William collectively referred to herein as "the McGuires"), and David Gagnon ("Gagnon") in cutting down a tree on the McGuire's property.
11. Dulberg lives in the next neighborhood over from the McGuire family.
12. Caroline McGuire and William McGuire are a married couple, who own real property in McHenry, McHenry County, Illinois ("the Property").
13. David Gagon is Caroline's son and William's stepson.
14. On June 28, 2011, at the Property, Gagnon was operating a chainsaw to remove branches from a tree and cut it down on the Property.
15. The McGuire's purchased and owned the chainsaw that was being utilized to trim, remove branches and cut down the tree.
16. Dulberg was invited to the McGuire's property to see if he wanted any of the wood from the tree.
17. William physically assisted with cutting down the tree and then, later supervised Gagnon's actions.
18. Caroline supervised Gagnon's and William's actions.
19. Gagnon and the McGuires asked Dulberg to assist with trimming and removal of the tree.
20. Gagnon was acting on behalf of Caroline and William and at their direction.
21. Caroline, William, and Gagnon all knew, or show have known that a chainsaw was dangerous and to take appropriate precautions when utilizing the chain saw.

22. The safety information was readily available to Caroline and William as the safety instructions are included with the purchase of the chainsaw.
23. The safety information indicated that the failure to take appropriate caution and safety measures could result in serious injury.
24. The safety information indicated that the likelihood of injury when not properly utilizing the chainsaw or not following the safety precautions is very high.
25. The safety instructions outlined are easy to follow and do not place a large burden on the operator of the chainsaw or the owner of the property.
26. Caroline, William, and Gagnon had a duty to exercise appropriate caution and follow the safety instructions for the chainsaw.
27. Caroline, William, and Gagnon breached that duty by either not exercising appropriate care, failing to follow the safety instructions, or failing to instruct Gagnon to exercise appropriate care and/or follow the safety instructions.
28. Caroline and William, owners of the property and the chainsaw, instructed Gagnon to use the chain saw despite Gagnon not being trained in operating the chainsaw.
29. Gagnon was operating the chain saw in close proximity to Dulberg.
30. Neither Gagnon nor Dulberg were provided protective equipment when operating or assisting with operating the chainsaw.
31. Gagnon failed to utilize the chainsaw in compliance with the safety measures outlined in the owner's manual.
32. Caroline and William failed to instruct and require that Gagnon utilize the chainsaw only in compliance with the safety measures outlined in the owner's manual.
33. Gagnon lost control of the chainsaw that he was using, and it struck Dulberg in the

right arm, cutting him severely.

34. Dulberg incurred substantial and catastrophic injuries, including, but not limited to, pain and suffering, loss of use of his right arm, current and future medical expenses in amount in excess of \$260,000, lost wages in excess of \$250,000, and other damages.

35. In May 2012, Dulberg hired Mast, Popovich, and Thomas J. Popovich, individually to represent him in prosecuting his claims against Gagnon and the McGuires. **Exhibit A.**

36. Mast, Popovich, and Thomas J. Popovich, individually on behalf of Dulberg filed a Complaint against Gagnon and the McGuires. **Exhibit B.**

37. Mast, Popovich, and Thomas J. Popovich, individually entered into an attorney client relationship with Dulberg.

38. Based upon the attorney client relationship, Mast, Popovich, and Thomas J. Popovich, individually owed professional duties to Dulberg, including a duty of care.

39. On behalf of Dulberg, Mast, Popovich, and Thomas J. Popovich, individually prosecuted claims against both Gagnon and the McGuires.

40. The claims against Gagnon were resolved later through binding mediation with new counsel.

41. The claims against the McGuires included (a) common law premises liability, (b) statutory premises liability, (c) common law negligence, and (d) vicarious liability for the acts of their son and agent.

42. In late 2013 or early 2014, Mast, Popovich, and Thomas J. Popovich individually urged Dulberg to settle the claims against the McGuires for \$5,000.

43. On November 18, 2013, Mast wrote two emails to Dulberg urging Dulberg to accept

the \$5,000.00, “the McGuire’s atty has offered us (you) \$5,000 in full settlement of the claim against the McGuires only. As we discussed, they have no liability in the case for what Dave did as property owners. So they will likely get out of the case on a motion at some point, so my suggestion is to take the \$5,000 now. You probably won't see any of it due to liens etc. but it will offset the costs deducted from any eventual recovery....

” \* \* \* “So if we do not accept their \$5,000 they will simply file a motion and get out of the case for free. That's the only other option is letting them file motion getting out of the case”. (See Emails attached as **Group Exhibit C.**)

44. Similarly, on November 20, 2013, Mast emailed Dulberg urging him to accept the \$5,000.00 otherwise “the McGuires will get out for FREE on a motion.” (See Emails attached as **Group Exhibit C.**)

45. On or around December 2013 or January 2014, Mast met with Dulberg and again advised them there was no cause of action against William McGuire and Caroline McGuire, and verbally told Dulberg that he had no choice but to execute a release in favor of the McGuires for the sum of \$5,000.00 and if he did not, he would get nothing.

46. During that same time frame, Mast advised Dulberg that the Restatement of Torts 318 was the only mechanism to recover from the McGuires and that Illinois did not recognize the Restate of Torts 318, thus Dulberg did not have any viable claims against the McGuires.

47. Mast failed to advise or inform Dulberg of other basis for recovery against the McGuires.

48. Based upon Mast’s erroneous advice that Dulberg’s claims against the McGuires were not viable and that Dulberg would not recover if he pursued the claims, Dulberg

settled with the McGuire's and their insurance company, Auto-Owners Insurance Company, for \$5,000.00 which included a release of all claims against the McGuires and claim for indemnification under the McGuires insurance policy. **Exhibit D (Settlement).**

49. Mast also told Dulberg that Gagnon's insurance policy was limited to \$100,000.

50. From 2013 forward, Mast and Popovich represented repeatedly to Dulberg that there was no possibility of any liability against William and/or Caroline McGuire and/or Auto- Owners Insurance Company and led Dulberg to believe that the matter was being properly handled.

51. Mast also reassured Dulberg that Dulberg would be able to receive the full amount of any eventual recovery from Gagnon.

52. After accepting the \$5,000 settlement, Dulberg wrote Mast an email on January 29, 2014 stating "I trust your judgment." (See Email attached as **Exhibit E.**)

53. Mast, Popovich and Thomas J. Popovich individually continued to represent Dulberg into 2015 and continuously assured him that his case was being handled properly.

54. The McGuires owned their home, had homeowner's insurance, and had other property that could have been utilized to pay a judgment against them and in favor of Dulberg.

55. Dulberg cooperated with and appropriately assisted Mast, Popovich, and Thomas J. Popovich individually in prosecuting the claims against Gagnon and the McGuires.

56. In December of 2016, Dulberg participated in binding mediation related to his claims against Gagnon.

57. In December of 2016, Dulberg was awarded a gross amount of \$660,000 and a net



award of \$561,000 after his contributory negligence was considered.

58. Dulberg was only able to recovery approximately \$300,000 of the award from Gagnon's insurance and was unable to collect from Gagnon personally.

59. Only after Dulberg obtained an award against Gagnon did he discover that his claims against the McGuires were viable and valuable.

60. Following the execution of the mediation agreement and the final mediation award, Dulberg realized for the first time in December of 2016 that the information Mast, Popovich and Thomas J. Popovich individually had given Dulberg was false and misleading, and that in fact, the settlement for \$5000.00 and dismissal of the McGuires was a serious and substantial mistake.

61. It was not until the mediation in December 2016, based on the expert's opinions that Dulberg retained for the mediation, that Dulberg became reasonably aware that Mast, Popovich and Thomas J. Popovich individually did not properly represent him by pressuring and coercing him to accept a settlement for \$5,000.00 on an "all or nothing" basis.

62. At all times relevant herein there existed an authoritarian and administrative hierarchy authority within Popovich such that Hans Mast reported the status and progress of the Dulberg case to Popovich and Thomas J. Popovich individually.

63. At all times relevant herein Thomas J. Popovich individually was the sole shareholder of Popovich.

64. At all times relevant herein Thomas J. Popovich individually was the director of Popovich.

65. At all times relevant herein Thomas J. Popovich individually was the president of

Popovich.

66 At all times relevant herein Thomas J. Popovich individually was the secretary of Popovich.

67. At all times relevant herein Thomas J. Popovich individually was the treasurer of Popovich.

68. At all times relevant herein Popovich and Thomas J. Popovich individually received status reports on the progress and the current relevant law of the Dulberg case from Hans Mast.

69. On at least two of the court appearances scheduled for the Dulberg case Thomas J. Popovich individually appeared for Popovich and Dulberg and identified himself for the record.

70. The two court appearances that Thomas J. Popovich individually identified himself for Popovich and Dulberg were on January 22, 2014 and February 4, 2015.

71. On every occasion Thomas J. Popovich individually appeared on behalf of Popovich and Dulberg he was fully briefed and current on the relevant law, the status and progress of the case.

72. The matter before the court on January 22, 2014 was McGuires' motion for a good faith finding that the settlement entered into between Dulberg and the McGuires for \$5,000.00 constituted a fair and reasonable and good faith settlement within the meaning of the Illinois Joint Tortfeasor Contribution Act, 740 ILCS 0.01 et seq.

73. On said date before entering an order granting the McGuires' motion that \$5,000.00 constituted a fair and reasonable and good faith settlement within the meaning of the Illinois Joint Tortfeasor Contribution Act, 740 ILCS 0.01 et seq. the

Honorable Thomas A. Meyer, Judge of said Court of McHenry County, Illinois inquired of Thomas J. Popovich individually whether Thomas J. Popovich individually had (any) No objections?

74. On said date Thomas J. Popovich individually responded on behalf of Popovich and Dulberg "Not From me."

75 On January 22, 2014 the Honorable Thomas A. Meyer, Judge of said Court of McHenry County, Illinois granted said motion.

76. Mast, Popovich, and Thomas J. Popovich individually, jointly, and severally, breached the duties owed Dulberg by violating the standard of care owed Dulberg in the following ways and respects:

- a) failed to fully and properly investigate the claims and/or basis for liability against the McGuires;
- b) failed to properly obtain information through discovery regarding McGuires assets, insurance coverages, and/or ability to pay a judgement and/or settlement against them;
- c) failed to accurately advise Dulberg of the McGuires' and Gagnon's insurance coverage related to the claims against them and/or Dulberg's ability to recover through McGuires' and Gagnon's insurance policies, including, but not limited to, incorrectly informing Dulberg that Gagnon's insurance policy was "only \$100,000" and no insurance company would pay close to that;
- d) failed to take such actions as were necessary during their respective representation of Dulberg to fix liability against the property owners of the subject property (the McGuires) who employed and/or were principals of Gagnon, and who sought the assistance of Dulberg by, for example, failing to obtain a liability expert;

- e) failed to accurately advise Dulberg regarding the McGuires' liability, likelihood of success of claims against the McGuires, the McGuires' ability to pay any judgment or settlement against them through insurance or other assets, and/or necessity of prosecuting all the claims against both the McGuires and Gagnon in order to obtain a full recovery;
- f) failed to canvass the neighborhood to discover witnesses to the events of June 28, 2011;
- g) failed to obtain jury settlement and verdict reporters to determine the proper range of settlement negotiations;
- h) coerced Dulberg, verbally and through emails, into accepting a settlement with the McGuires for \$5,000 by misleading Dulberg into believing that he had no other choice but to accept the settlement or else "The McGuires will get out for FREE on a motion."

76. As a direct result of Mast and Popovich and Thomas J. Popovich individually's wrongful actions, Dulberg suffered serious and substantial damages, not only as a result of the injury as set forth in the binding mediation award, but due to the direct actions of Mast, and Popovich and Thomas J. Popovich individually in urging Dulberg to release the McGuires, and Popovich and Thomas J. Popovich individually in not objecting to the motion for a good faith finding that the settlement entered into between Dulberg and the McGuires for \$5,000.00 constituted a fair and reasonable and good faith settlement within the meaning of the Illinois Joint Tortfeasor Contribution Act, 740 ILCS 0.01 et seq., lost the sum of well over \$300,000.00 which would not have occurred but for the acts of Mast and The Law Offices of Thomas Popovich, P.C., and

Thomas J. Popovich individually.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff Paul Dulberg prays this Honorable Court enter judgment on such verdict as a jury of twelve (12) shall return, together with the costs of suit and such other and further relief as may be just, all-in excess of the jurisdictional minimums of this Honorable Court

Respectfully submitted by

/s/ Alphonse A. Talarico

Alphonse A. Talarico

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