

Timeline of Events:

Unknown Date:

- Theresa, an 84-year-old woman, hires a financial consultant who later recommends a fiduciary be appointed to manage her finances.
- Theresa signs papers presented by the fiduciary without realizing she is giving up control of her finances.

Date Unknown (Shortly after the previous event):

- Theresa realizes she no longer has control of her finances and wants the fiduciary removed.
- The fiduciary refuses and only gives Theresa a small allowance.
- Theresa finds a new legal team – a friendly attorney and his colleague – to help her fight the fiduciary.

January 11, 2018:

- Thomas F. Coleman publishes an op-ed in the Los Angeles Daily Journal criticizing the frequent misuse of conservatorships and highlighting Theresa's case as an example.

May 23, 2018:

- Thomas F. Coleman writes to Judge Mary Thornton House, expressing concern that Theresa's court-appointed attorney, Robert Risley, is not representing her interests and is violating her rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Coleman requests the court to remove Risley and appoint a new attorney who will effectively communicate with Theresa and advocate for her wishes.

June 8, 2018:

- Judge House responds to Coleman, stating she has reviewed his letter and supporting materials and will schedule a hearing.

June 11, 2018:

- A non-appearance case review takes place before Judge David Cowan.
- Judge Cowan orders a hearing on August 20, 2018, to address Coleman's concerns regarding Theresa's case and Risley's conduct.

August 20, 2018:

- The hearing takes place before Judge Cowan.
- Coleman is present but Theresa, Risley, and other interested parties are not present.
- Coleman raises concerns about Risley's "dual role" and argues that Judge Cowan should recuse himself due to potential bias from a previous training seminar where Cowan instructed attorneys to be the "eyes and ears of the court."

August 21, 2018:

- Coleman writes to Judge Cowan, summarizing the issues discussed at the August 20 hearing and reiterating his request for Judge Cowan to recuse himself.

Date Unknown (After August 21, 2018):

- Coleman submits a declaration outlining the events and his arguments.

Cast of Characters:

Theresa:

- An 84-year-old woman who was placed under conservatorship.
- Struggling to regain control of her finances and is being denied access to her own money.
- Faces communication challenges and requires an attorney who can effectively understand and advocate for her needs.

The Fiduciary:

- The person appointed to manage Theresa's finances.
- Refuses to relinquish control despite Theresa's wishes and only provides her with a small allowance.
- Their actions are described as potentially exploiting Theresa's vulnerability.

The Initial Financial Consultant:

- The person Theresa originally hired to manage her finances.
- Ultimately recommended the appointment of the fiduciary, leading to Theresa's loss of financial control.

Thomas F. Coleman:

- Legal director of Spectrum Institute, a non-profit organization advocating for the rights of people with disabilities.
- Author of the Los Angeles Daily Journal op-ed and letters to Judges House and Cowan.
- Arguing for Theresa's rights and pushing for the removal of Risley and Judge Cowan's recusal.

Robert Risley:

- Theresa's court-appointed attorney.
- Accused of not acting in Theresa's best interests and violating her rights by sharing confidential information and failing to adequately communicate with her.

Judge Mary Thornton House:

- Judge initially assigned to Theresa's conservatorship case.
- Responded to Coleman's initial letter and scheduled a hearing, but the case was later transferred to Judge Cowan.

Judge David Cowan:

- Judge who presided over the August 20, 2018 hearing.
- Refused to cancel the hearing despite Theresa's absence.
- Requested to recuse himself due to potential bias from previous statements made during a training seminar for attorneys involved in conservatorship cases.

The Friendly Attorney and Colleague:

- The legal team currently assisting Theresa in fighting for her rights and seeking to remove the fiduciary.
- Mentioned as providing support and guidance to Theresa throughout the ordeal.