

**To:** Genevieve.Jopanda@treasurer.ca.gov  
**Cc:** Kasey.O'Connor@treasurer.ca.gov; Mark.desio@treasurer.ca.gov  
**Subject:** Feb 2 Town Hall on Elder Financial Abuse  
**Attachments:** review-team.pdf

Honorable Fiona Ma  
Treasurer  
State of California

Dear Madam Treasurer,

It has come to our attention that you are working collaboratively with the State Assembly on a Town Hall meeting focused on elder financial abuse.

One area where such abuses regularly occur involves the award of attorney fees in probate conservatorship proceedings. A senior can have his or her life savings evaporate through the stroke of a judicial pen when fees are awarded to attorneys to be paid from the assets of these involuntary litigants. Sometimes the attorney fees of their adversaries are paid from the funds of these seniors, even though the seniors themselves have been denied their own attorney.

Spectrum Institute has been studying this problem for more than a year. We are now convening an Attorney Fee Review Team to dig even deeper into the matter. A copy of a news release about the formation of the review team is attached. <https://spectruminstitute.org/review-team.pdf>

It would be appropriate for the Town Hall forum to include a segment about this type of elder financial abuse. If invited, I would be pleased to share our preliminary findings, discuss what the review team will be doing in the coming months, and invite the public to submit documents about such attorney fee abuses in other probate conservatorship cases.

I look forward to your reply.

Respectfully,

Thomas F. Coleman  
Legal Director  
Spectrum Institute  
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