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Judge tosses Huntsman lawsuit against the LDS Church



Photo by: Rick Bowmer/AP

FILE - In this Sept. 11, 2014, file photo, the angel Moroni statue sits atop the Salt Lake Temple, at Temple Square, in Salt Lake City. Utah is asking a judge to dismiss a case filed by marijuana advocates claiming the state conspired with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to overhaul a voter-approved medical pot ballot initiative. (AP Photo/Rick Bowmer, File)



By: Ben Winslow

Posted at 2:20 PM, Sep 14, 2021 and last updated 3:44 PM, Sep 14, 2021



in tithing.

In a ruling issued Tuesday, Judge Stephen Wilson rejected all of Huntsman's claims. But he also rejected the Latter-day Saint church's assertion that the First Amendment barred Huntsman from bringing his lawsuit in the first place.

Huntsman, a member of the wealthy Utah family and the brother of former governor Jon Huntsman Jr., sued the Church **alleging it misspent tithing money he donated throughout his membership in the faith**. He resigned his membership in the Latter-day Saint faith in 2020.

He specifically alleged that tithing money was misspent to fund the posh City Creek Center project in downtown Salt Lake City. **The Church has denied it.**

Judge Wilson rejected Huntsman's claims, saying no reasonable juror could find that Latter-day Saint leaders made false statements about where the money for the project came from.

"The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is grateful that the court has granted its motion for summary judgment. We are further grateful that the court agreed that the statements made by President Gordon B. Hinckley and other Church leaders are accurate as to the source of funding for the City Creek project," Church spokesman Eric Hawkins said in a statement to FOX 13.

Huntsman's attorney told FOX 13 they intended to appeal the judge's ruling.

"While we are obviously disappointed with Judge Wilson's order, we look forward to vindicating Mr. Huntsman's position in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals," David Jonelis said.

Read the judge's ruling here:



Case 2:21-cv-02504-SVW-SK Document 55 Filed 09/10/21 Page 1 of 12 Page ID #:2295

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

CIVIL MINUTES - GENERAL

Case No.	2:21-cv-02504	Date	September 10, 2021
Title	<i>James Huntsman v. Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints</i>		

Present: The Honorable STEPHEN V. WILSON, U.S. DISTRICT JUDGE

J. Remigio	N/A
Deputy Clerk	Court Reporter / Recorder

Attorneys Present for Plaintiffs:	Attorneys Present for Defendants:
N/A	N/A

Proceedings: ORDER GRANTING [32] MOTION FOR SUMMARY JUDGMENT.

Before the Court is a motion for summary judgment filed by the Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (“Defendant”). Dkt. 32. Plaintiff James Huntsman opposes the motion. Dkt. 36. For the below reasons, Defendant’s motion is GRANTED.

I. Factual and Procedural Background.¹

Defendant is the legal entity behind the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, a Christian religion with its worldwide headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah. Members of Defendant’s church pay tithing—*i.e.*, a tenth of their annual increase or income—to Defendant.

Plaintiff was born into a family of devout members of Defendant’s church. Plaintiff spent most of his childhood in Utah, and his father and maternal grandfather were in leadership positions at Defendant’s church. As a child, Plaintiff learned about tithing from his parents and from Church meetings that he attended. Plaintiff paid tithing for twenty-two years of his adult life, from 1993 to 2015.

¹ The facts in this section are largely undisputed and sourced from Plaintiff’s complaint and the parties’ briefs and supporting materials. However, the section is provided for background purposes only. Nothing in this section should be construed as a factual finding.

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