

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON

If you were arrested, incarcerated, or a warrant was issued for your arrest for failure to pay legal financial obligations to Benton County Superior Court without the opportunity to first appear at a hearing, a class action settlement may affect your rights.

A court authorized this notice. This is not a solicitation from a lawyer.

- An individual named Jaclyn Rae Sleater (“Class Representative” or “Plaintiff”), on behalf of herself and others like her, sued Benton County (the “County” or “Defendant”) for violating the Fourth, Fifth, and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution based on the County’s alleged practice of policies, practices, and customs regarding enforcement of legal financial obligations (“LFOs”), including issuing arrest warrants for non-payment of LFOs without first issuing a summons or other court directive to appear at a hearing and the incarceration of persons for non-payment of LFOs in Benton County Superior Court without first determining the willfulness of the non-payment at a hearing.
- The parties have entered into a Settlement Agreement in a certified class action lawsuit filed on behalf of all persons to whom Benton County issued arrest warrants for failure to pay LFOs without first issuing a summons or other directive to appear at a hearing (“Issuance Class”) AND all persons arrested and incarcerated pursuant to arrest warrants issued by Benton County for failure to pay LFOs without first issuing a summons or other directive to appear at a hearing (“Arrest Class”) from March 15, 2014 through September 20, 2022.
- Your legal rights are affected by the Settlement, and you have a choice to make now:

Your Legal Rights and Options in This Lawsuit	
Do Nothing	<p>Stay in this lawsuit. Do not receive a cash payment. Give up certain rights.</p> <p>If you do nothing, you will remain in the settlement and if it is approved by the Court, your share of the settlement funds will be used to pay down any outstanding LFO debts you have in a Benton County Superior Court case, but you will not receive a cash payment. You will be bound by the terms of the settlement, which means you will give up your rights to sue Benton County on your own over the same claims brought in this lawsuit.</p>
Submit a Claim Form	<p>Stay in this lawsuit. Be eligible to receive a cash payment. Give up certain rights.</p> <p>If you submit a claim form, you may be eligible to receive a cash payment from the settlement if it is approved by the Court. First, your share of the settlement funds will be used to pay down any outstanding LFO debts you have in a Benton County Superior Court case. Any amounts left over after paying the outstanding LFO balance will be issued to you via check. By participating in the settlement, you give up your rights to sue Benton County on your own over the same claims brought in this lawsuit.</p>
Ask to be Excluded	<p>Get out of this lawsuit. Get no benefits from it. Keep rights.</p> <p>If you ask to be excluded from the lawsuit you will not receive a payment. But you keep any rights to sue Benton County separately about the same or similar legal claims in this lawsuit. If you want to be excluded, you must submit an Exclusion Request in writing to the Claims Administrator by mail or online by April 24, 2023 More information about submitting an Exclusion Request is available under paragraph 9 below and on the settlement website: www.cptgroupcaseinfo.com/BentonCountySettlement.</p>

Object to the Settlement	<p>Stay in the Class. File a written objection to the Settlement with the Court.</p> <p>If you disagree with any portion of the Settlement Agreement, you may submit a written Objection to Class Counsel, which will be considered by the Court at the Final Approval Hearing. You may also ask to speak at the hearing. If you submit an Objection, you may not exclude yourself from the Settlement. If the Settlement is approved, you will be bound by the Settlement Agreement and you give up any rights to sue Benton County separately about the same or similar legal claims in this lawsuit, but you will still be eligible to receive a payment from the Settlement Fund. Your Objection must be postmarked no later than April 24, 2023. More information about submitting an Objection is available under paragraph 10 below and on the settlement website: www.cptgroupcaseinfo.com/BentonCountySettlement.</p>
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BASIC INFORMATION

1. Why did I receive this notice?

Benton County Superior Court records show that at some time between March 15, 2014 and September 20, 2022 you had a warrant issued for your arrest and/or were arrested and incarcerated for failure to pay LFOs to Benton County Superior Court without first being issued a summons or other court directive to appear at a hearing. This notice explains that the parties have reached an agreement to settle a class action lawsuit that may affect you. You have legal rights and options that you may exercise before the Court decides whether to approve the Settlement. Judge Stanley A. Bastain of the United States District Court, Eastern District of Washington, is overseeing this class action. The lawsuit is known as *Sleater v. Benton County*, Case No. 4:17-cv-05033-SAB.

2. What is a class action and who is involved?

In a class action lawsuit, one or more people called “Class Representatives” (in this lawsuit Jaclyn Rae Sleater) sue on behalf of other people who have similar claims. The people together are a “Class” or “Class Members.” The individual who sued is called the Plaintiff. The entity she sued (in this case Benton County) is called the Defendant. One lawsuit resolves the issues for everyone in the Class—except for those people who choose to exclude themselves from the Class.

3. Why is there a settlement?

The Court did not decide in favor of Plaintiff or Benton County. Instead, both sides agreed to a settlement. This way, they avoid the cost and risk associated with a trial, and the people affected will receive compensation. The Class Representative and her attorneys think the Settlement is best for the Settlement Class Members.

4. What does the Settlement provide?

To settle this lawsuit, Benton County has agreed to pay up to \$779,600 into a Class Fund which will be used to pay down outstanding LFO balances in Benton County Superior Court cases, provide cash payments to Settlement Class Members who file claim forms, and an incentive award payment of up to \$25,000 to the Class Representative (subject to Court approval). Benton County will also pay up to \$300,000 in attorneys' fees and reimbursement of out-of-pocket litigation costs, and will pay costs related to claims administration separately from the Class Fund (subject to Court approval).

Each Settlement Class Member will receive a share of the Class Fund based on the following:

- a. Arrest Class Members who timely return a Claim Form (provided with this Notice) will receive a payment of up to \$1,000, subject to the offset described below.
- b. Issuance Class Members who timely return a Claim Form (provided with this Notice) will receive a payment of up to \$200, subject to the offset described below.

Offset: All settlement awards made to Settlement Class Members—regardless of whether they return a Claim Form—will first be used to pay down outstanding LFO debts in a Benton County Superior Court case, with any remaining funds issued directly to Settlement Class Members.

If you do not return a claim form, one third of the award set forth above (\$333 for members of the Arrest Class; \$67 for members of the Issuance Class) will be paid into the Residual Fund after first offsetting any amount of outstanding LFO debt.

After the total amount of this Residual Fund is determined, it will be paid to all Settlement Class Members who timely returned a Claim Form on an equal per capita basis. For example, if 100 individuals return a Claim Form, each will receive 1% of the Residual Fund, in addition to their monetary award of \$200 or \$1,000. There will be no reversion of any Residual Funds to Benton County.

5. Do I have a lawyer in this lawsuit?

The Court has decided the attorneys listed below are qualified to serve as Class Counsel. You will not be charged for these lawyers. You may hire your own attorney at your expense.

Toby Marshall
Eric Nusser
TERRELL MARSHALL LAW GROUP PLLC
936 N 34th Street, Suite 300
Seattle, Washington 98103

Breean Lawrence Beggs
PAUKERT & TROPPEMANN PLLC
522 West Riverside Ave, Suite 500
Spokane, Washington 99201

6. How will the lawyers be paid?

Class Counsel will ask the Court to approve payment of \$300,000 for their attorneys' fees and to reimburse their out-of-pocket expenses. These payments would pay Class Counsel for investigating the facts, litigating the case, and negotiating the Settlement. Benton County has agreed to pay Class Counsel separately from the Class Fund so that Class Counsel's fees will not reduce the amounts to be paid to Settlement Class Members. Class Counsel will also request a service award of \$25,000 for the Class Representative, Ms. Sleater, to be paid from the Class Fund to compensate her for her time and effort during the litigation. Class Counsel's complete request for fees, costs, and the service award to the Class Representative will be posted on the Settlement Website www.cptgroupcaseinfo.com/BentonCountySettlement by April 24, 2023.

7. How do I submit a Claim Form?

Settlement Class Members who wish to receive a payment from the Class Fund must return the Claim Form, attached at the end of this Notice, to the Claims Administrator either via email at BentonCountySettlement@cptgroup.com or via US Mail at *Sleater, et al. v Benton County*, c/o CPT Group, Inc., 50 Corporate Park, Irvine, CA 92606. To be timely, the returned Claim Form must be emailed or postmarked on or before April 24, 2023.

8. When will I get my payment?

If no appeals are filed within 31 days after the Court enters the Final Approval Order, then the Order will become final and the Settlement will be effective. The Claims Administrator will mail checks to Settlement Class Members no later than 180 days from the Settlement's Effective Date. The checks will be valid for 180 days from the date of issuance. However, if an appeal is filed, payments will not be sent until after the appeal is finally resolved.

9. How do I ask to be excluded from the Settlement?

If you don't want a payment from this Settlement or if you want to keep the right to sue or continue to sue Benton County over the same claims brought in this lawsuit, then you must take steps to remove yourself from the Settlement Class. This is called excluding yourself—or is sometimes referred to as "opting out" of the Settlement Class.

To exclude yourself from the Settlement you must send the request in writing to the Claims Administrator saying that you want to be excluded from the *Sleater v. Benton County* settlement. Your exclusion request letter must include your name, phone number, mailing address, and the case name and number (*Sleater v. Benton County*, Case No. 4:17-cv-05033-SAB), and the letter must be signed by you. You can mail your exclusion request letter, postmarked on or before April 24, 2023 to the following address:

Sleater, et al. v Benton County
c/o CPT Group, Inc.
50 Corporate Park
Irvine, CA 92606

If you ask to be excluded, you will not get any payment, and you cannot object to the Settlement. You will not be legally bound by anything that happens in this lawsuit.

10. How do I object to the Settlement?

If you are a Settlement Class Member and you do not exclude yourself from the Settlement Class, you can object to the Settlement if you don't like any part of it. Your written objection must provide your name, address, telephone number, the name and number of the case (*Sleater v. Benton County*, Case No. 4:17-cv-05033-SAB), and a statement of the reasons why you (i) believe the Court should find that the proposed settlement is not in the best interests of the Class, or (ii) object to Class Counsel's motion for attorneys' fees and costs. You must file your objection with the Court by mailing it to the address below, postmarked on or before April 24, 2023:

Clerk of the Court
U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Washington
William O. Douglas United States Courthouse
25 South 3rd Street, Room 201,
Yakima, Washington 98901

11. What is the difference between objecting and excluding myself from the Settlement?

Objecting simply means telling the Court that you don't like something about the Settlement. You can object only if you stay in the Settlement Class. Excluding yourself from the Settlement Class is telling the Court that you don't want to be part of the Settlement Class. If you exclude yourself, you have no basis to object because the case no longer affects you.

12. When and where will the Court hold a hearing on the fairness of the Settlement?

The Court will hold the Final Fairness Hearing on May 8, 2023 at 1:30 p.m., before the Honorable Stanley A. Bastian at the Richland U.S. Courthouse & Federal Building, 825 Jadwin Avenue, Room 189, Richland, Washington 99352, to determine whether the Settlement is fair, reasonable, adequate, and in the best interest of the Class. At the hearing, the Court will hear any objections and arguments concerning the fairness of the proposed Settlement, including those related to the amount requested by Class Counsel for attorneys' fees and expenses and the incentive award to the Class Representative. After the hearing, the Court will decide whether to approve the Settlement. We do not know how long these decisions will take.

The date and time of the Final Fairness Hearing are subject to change by Court Order. Any changes will be posted on the Settlement website, www.cptgroupcaseinfo.com/BentonCountySettlement.

13. Do I have to come the hearing?

No. Class Counsel will answer any questions the Court may have. You are welcome to come to the hearing at your own expense. If you send an objection you don't have to come to the Court to talk about it. As long as your written objection was filed or mailed on time, and meets the other criteria described in the Settlement Agreement, the Court will consider it. You may also pay a lawyer to attend, but you don't have to.

14. May I speak at the hearing?

If you submit an objection (see Question 10 above) and would like to speak to the Court at the hearing, you

must state your intention to do so in your objection. If you intend to speak at the hearing, your written objection must identify any witnesses and documents that you intend to use or submit at the Final Approval Hearing. Your objection must be mailed to the Court at the address in Question 10, no later than May 1, 2023. You cannot speak at the hearing if you exclude yourself.

15. Are there more details about the Settlement?

This Notice summarizes the proposed Settlement. You can call 1 (888) 317-0428 toll free; write to the Claims Administrator, *Sleater, et al. v Benton County*, c/o CPT Group, Inc., 50 Corporate Park, Irvine, CA 92606; or visit the website at www.cptgroupcaseinfo.com/BentonCountySettlement where you will find answers to common questions about the Settlement, the Settlement Agreement, Plaintiff's Class Action Complaint, Class Counsel's motion for an award of attorneys' fees and costs, and other information.

**PLEASE DO NOT CONTACT THE COURT, THE JUDGE, OR THE DEFENDANT WITH
QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SETTLEMENT.**