

BOLHOUSE, BAAR & LEFERE, P.C.
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

Turning a Judgment into Money in the Bank

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Our law firm has specialized in the area of collections for many, many years, and it makes up a large portion of my particular practice. Some creditors prefer to try and collect smaller accounts on their own, while some seek the assistance of an attorney for all their bad debts. Regardless, please be aware that the amount you can sue for in small claims court has been raised to \$5,000. Whether you process cases yourself through small claims court or use an attorney to try to get paid, at some point you need to get a judgment against a defendant to allow you to collect.

A judgment can be a really impressive-looking piece of paper, but in and of itself it's worth nothing. The key in any collection action is to be able to transform that judgment into money in the bank.

Our firm has become very sophisticated in the process of transforming judgments into cash. One of the keys to success is having strong, solid information about a defendant. We gather as much information as we can about where a defendant works, where they bank, what real estate they own, what vehicles, boats and other toys they own, and so forth. Sometimes that information is available from our clients, sometimes we use search engines that we contract with, social media, and other online resources. As licensed attorneys, we also have access to restricted search engines that give us additional information regarding a defendant's collectability. Sometimes we need to get more aggressive and use the assistance of private investigators to help us gather information.

Once we have the information we need and the proper court orders, we can proceed by garnishing wages, bank accounts, state tax returns, and other assets. We're able to act on orders to seize and have a specially-trained court officer visit a defendant's home or business to try to collect by seizing assets. Sometimes we subpoena defendants to court and ask them to bring all their documents and records. We try to be as appropriately aggressive as we can to transform that paper judgment into the cash our clients are looking for.

While we are very successful in collecting judgments, sometimes a defendant simply has nothing. No matter how aggressive or sophisticated our collection methods are, if a defendant has nothing, there's nothing to collect. At that point, patience is a virtue. Judgments are good for 10 years, and with our search capabilities, we'll sometimes simply shelve a file for 2 or 3 years and then start the search process fresh and see if the defendant or defendants have improved their position.

If you have some bad debts that you'd like to talk to us about, we'd be happy to discuss your options for collection with you.

Rick Bolhouse focuses his practice in the areas of Family Law, Personal Injury, Collections/Creditors' Rights, and General Litigation. You can reach him at rickb@bolouselaw.com.