

USATODAY.com - Judge pooh-poohs lawsuit over Disney licensing fees

In a 28-page ruling, McCoy wrote that SSI altered documents and used private investigators to pilfer confidential Disney documents from Dumpsters. SSI's Pati Slesinger also lied in court, he wrote. "SSI's misconduct is so egregious that no remedy short of terminating sanctions can effectively remove the threat and adequately protect both the institution of justice and (Disney) ... from further SSI abuse," he wrote.

"The Winnie the Pooh case is finally over, and over for good," said Disney lawyer Daniel Petrocelli, who will also represent former Enron CEO Jeffrey Skilling in his upcoming trial. "Every one of (SSI's) claims has been dismissed with prejudice."

But Bret Fausett, whose firm became the eighth team for the Slesingers when it took over the lawsuit in December, said McCoy didn't rule on the merits of the case and promised an appeal. "It will take longer, but we feel we will have our day in court." As for the garbage picking cited by McCoy, Fausett said the documents came from "publicly accessible" Dumpsters.

Winnie the Pooh is Disney's No. 1 cash cow, bigger even than Mickey Mouse, generating \$1 billion for the company and \$6 billion at retail. Disney has said that losing the case would have cost hundreds of millions of dollars, at a minimum.

Disney shares rose 10 cents to close at \$25.20 on the New York Stock Exchange.