

Ex-SLT firefighter files lawsuit saying deputy told employer he was in a gang

By Stephen Baxter, Santa Cruz Sentinel

WATSONVILLE — A 24-year-old Watsonville man is suing Santa Cruz County law enforcement agencies after he was pulled over on his motorcycle and later lost his job because a deputy called his employer.

Kristopher Klay was riding his motorcycle on Highway 1 near Watsonville in May 2013 when he was stopped by members of the Santa Cruz County Gang Task Force. A South Lake Tahoe firefighter at the time, Klay was wearing a “cut,” or leather vest with a patch of the Guerillas Motorcycle Club — a group that rides together and raises money for youth organizations.

Deputies who pulled him over and stopped another rider who was riding with him on a second motorcycle. Authorities asked Klay for his registration, which was current, and Klay and the other rider were let go without being ticketed or arrested.

Four weeks later, about May 30, 2013, Sgt. Stefan Fish of the task force called Klay’s boss at South Lake Tahoe Fire and told him about the traffic stop, according to court documents.

It’s not clear exactly what was said in the phone call, but a few days later, Klay was called in to meet with his fire chief. He was then fired from his job, which was as a probationary firefighter because he recently started.

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