

## **Erik Olson Statement on *Ella T. v. State of California* Settlement**

Morrison & Foerster has a long history of support for lawsuits designed to improve education in California. Our firm's dedication to this work derives from a foundational belief that education is a cornerstone of our nation's future prosperity and from a deep commitment to equal opportunity for all citizens.

In 2017, Morrison & Foerster helped launch this lawsuit to bring much-needed attention to the heartbreaking situation facing California schools with abysmal literacy rates. Reading is critical to any education. Unless California students learn to read and write effectively, they face a grim prognosis, which falls hardest on under-resourced communities that lack other economic and social resources to overcome this deficit.

The *Ella T.* lawsuit focused a spotlight on three of the lowest performing schools in the state as of 2017. We pursued it to make real the legal conclusion that "The State is the entity with ultimate responsibility for equal operation of the common school system," which was determined by the California Supreme Court in *Butt v. State of California* in 1992. When specific schools repeatedly fall fundamentally below the prevailing state standards for instruction on reading and writing, the State must act.

Today's settlement is a critical step to address these problems. California will provide \$50 million in critically needed funds, which will be directed specifically to improving literacy rates at 75 of the lowest performing schools in the state. It will create new resources that are vital to address the inequalities in literacy education present in California's schools.

Morrison & Foerster is proud to play a role in making sure that no elementary school student in California lacks a full opportunity to learn to read and write. California has the most vibrant and innovative economy in the world. It must not deprive its children of the benefits of literacy. This settlement is an important step in making sure that does not happen.