



The Great Equalizer

HOW STENO HELPED DRIVE A LANDMARK
CIVIL RIGHTS WIN



ANDREW M. STROTH Managing Director at Action Injury Law Group

Customer Story

Andrew M. Stroth, Managing Director at Action Injury Law Group, a national civil rights law firm based in Chicago, describes how **Steno's Litigation Genius** gave his trial team a decisive edge in a high-stakes federal civil rights case—from jury selection through post-trial motions.



The Case

One August evening in 2018, Ebony Tate was at home in Chicago's Back of the Yards neighborhood with her four children. The youngest, a four-year-old, had fallen asleep beside her on the couch. Her sons were nearby playing video games. Her mother, Cynthia Eason, was getting ready for bed. Then a Chicago Police SWAT team forced entry into the apartment. Officers entered with weapons drawn. The four children were ordered out barefoot, and Eason was forced into the street in a t-shirt and underwear.

The police, however, had the wrong house. The person they were looking for lived next door. The family filed a federal civil rights lawsuit against the city and the officers involved, alleging that the raid, based on unvetted information from a paid informant, **violated their constitutional rights**. But the lawsuit went further than the conduct of the officers on the scene. The plaintiffs alleged that what happened to the Tate family was not an isolated incident, but the product of a longstanding pattern and practice within the Chicago Police Department of using excessive force against children.

Six years later, the case went to trial in federal court. The plaintiffs' team, led by trial attorney Al Hofeld Jr., Zach Hofeld, and Julian Johnson, and augmented by Andrew M. Stroth and his firm, Action Injury Law Group, faced a city with virtually unlimited legal resources, a well-coordinated defense, and a fundamental conflict of testimony at the heart of the case.

\$5.74

million verdict

\$240,000

in punitive damages against the officers

8 jurors

from raid to verdict

2nd Monell

finding of its kind in Chicago's history

In February 2026, **a federal jury returned a \$5.74 million verdict in favor of the Tate family**, including \$240,000 in punitive damages assessed directly against the officers. Crucially, the jury issued a Monell finding: a determination that the City of Chicago was liable for a constitutional violation based on a pattern and practice of using excessive force against children. **It was only the second time in the city's history that such a finding had been made.**



The Challenge

Tate v. City of Chicago presented a uniquely difficult set of challenges as it approached trial. No body camera footage existed, meaning the case would turn on the credibility of competing testimony.

The city had separate counsel representing both the municipality and the individual officers, giving the defense significant resources and coordination. And because the plaintiffs were pursuing a pattern-and-practice theory, they needed to prove not just what happened on one night in 2018, but a systemic problem within an entire police department.

The trial ran three and a half weeks. There were more than 40 witnesses. Opposing counsel filed motions mid-trial that required immediate, substantive responses. Through all of it, the trial team had to work nights and weekends to continue **preparing witnesses, refining cross-examinations, and building toward closing**, all while going up against a city with virtually unlimited legal resources. And unlike the city, **the plaintiffs' team was working on contingency**, meaning that lead attorney Al Hofeld Jr. had fronted years of litigation costs with no guarantee of recovery. Going to trial was a significant financial risk on top of everything else.

It was into this environment that Stroth introduced **Litigation Genius, Steno's AI-powered legal tool**, to the trial team.

“

I've always been big on technology, and I saw what the Steno technology was able to do quickly and efficiently.”

ANDREW M. STROTH

Managing Director at Action Injury Law Group

40+

witnesses



3 1/2

weeks of trial



6 years

from raid to verdict





The Anatomy of a Win: Litigation Genius in Action

“

It would have taken a team of 10 associates weeks to do all of this work.

The technology gave us a competitive advantage. It really helped us shape and frame the case.”

ANDREW M. STROTH

Managing Director at Action Injury Law Group

Getting Up to Speed

Stroth joined the trial team four months before proceedings began. The case file was years deep: depositions, expert reports, prior motions, court orders, hundreds of documents. Stroth had worked with Steno's technology before, and as the team assembled for trial, he recognized **the unique value that Litigation Genius could bring throughout the trial.**

Not everyone was immediately convinced. Persuading seasoned trial lawyers to trust AI-assisted analysis required some reassurance, but **the results came quickly.**

Within a short time the team had **detailed case summaries, a witness overview, and a set of preliminary trial themes, all with complete case citations,** the kind of foundational work pulled from thousands of pages of documentation that would otherwise have required a team of associates working for weeks to produce.

Jury Selection

The case was to be tried in the Northern District of Illinois, where the potential pool skewed suburban. Before a single witness took the stand, the team **used Litigation Genius to think through jury composition and build a profile of their ideal juror**—someone likely to weigh the evidence on its merits, with no strong predisposition toward law enforcement—and to identify what aspects of the case would resonate most with that profile.

After selection, **they ran the same analysis in reverse, evaluating the jury they had actually seated.**



“

Instead of starting from scratch, we were starting in the red zone. We had summaries, we had draft cross-examinations. We didn't have to run 80 yards. We just had to go the additional 10 or 20 yards to score the touchdown.”

ANDREW M. STROTH

Managing Director at Action Injury Law Group

Witness Preparation and Cross-Examination

With dozens of witnesses, many of whom were deposed multiple times, preparing cross-examination outlines the traditional way would have required a small army working around the clock. Instead, the team **used Litigation Genius to generate strategy documents on every witness**, including how they had previously testified, where their prior testimony was vulnerable, and how to approach them at trial.

One witness illustrated the value particularly clearly. The city's expert on police policies and practices was called to testify that CPD officers follow proper procedures. The team used Litigation Genius to **run a comprehensive analysis** of this individual's prior testimony across **multiple depositions, identifying inconsistencies, weak points, and lines of attack**. The result was a detailed, citation-ready cross-examination guide that, by Stroth's account, severely damaged the witness's credibility.

Daily Transcript Review

The team ordered daily transcripts throughout the trial. At the end of each day, they needed to assess what had happened: which arguments had landed, where the defense had scored, what the day's testimony meant for the case theory. **Litigation Genius let the team engage with those transcripts in real time**, analyzing testimony against the jury instructions and tracking how each witness's account fit the pattern-and-practice argument the plaintiffs needed to prove.



“

That process saved I don't even know how many hours, and the response focused on what was absolutely most critical for our argument.”

ANDREW M. STROTH

Managing Director at Action Injury Law Group

Mid-Trial Motions

Late in the trial, opposing counsel filed a motion for a directed verdict: a formal request asking the judge to rule in the city's favor before the case reached the jury. The plaintiffs **had days to respond to a multi-page legal brief while simultaneously continuing to try the case.**

The team fed the city's motion into Litigation Genius along with relevant background documents and prior filings, and used the tool to **generate a response framework**. Rather than starting from a blank page while exhausted and mid-trial, they were able to build a substantive, targeted reply focused on the arguments that mattered most.

Opening and Closing Arguments

Litigation Genius supported both ends of the trial. It helped **shape the perspective** for the opening statement at the outset and, weeks later, helped **identify the strongest themes and evidence for closing, pulling from the entire trial record** to connect everything back to the jury instructions. The tool also helped generate ideas for demonstratives, the visual aids used to anchor testimony for a jury.



The Verdict and What It Means

All eight jurors voted for the Tate family. The **\$5.74 million verdict** was notable not just for its size but for what the jury said. **The Monell finding was only the second of its kind in Chicago's history.** The plaintiffs' team had built every deposition and cross-examination around that theory and proven it to a jury with no particular predisposition toward it.

For a trial team working on contingency, efficiency is part of the math. By compressing weeks of associate work into hours, Litigation Genius didn't just help win the case, it made the economics of taking on a case like this more viable.

The verdict didn't end the work. Post-trial motions, attorney fee calculations under federal fee-shifting rules, and other filings kept the team busy well after the jury came back. Litigation Genius remained useful throughout, a reminder that in complex litigation, the case file doesn't close when the verdict does.

Stroth, who regularly goes up against well-funded municipal opponents, sees **Litigation Genius as a leveling force.**

"Technology is the great equalizer," Stroth said. "We need to spend our time on legal strategy, not reading a 200-page deposition cover to cover."

ANDREW M. STROTH

Managing Director at Action Injury Law Group

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