

NY man who claims Facebook stake gets new lawyer

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(AP) -- A New York man suing Mark Zuckerberg for a stake in Facebook has changed attorneys as the multibillion-dollar social media company pushes for access to a contract and emails that form the basis of his case - documents that Zuckerberg's attorneys call fakes.

San Diego attorney Jeffrey Lake is now representing Paul Ceglia of Wellsville, N.Y., replacing the large New York firm of DLA Piper and the Buffalo firm of Lippes Mathias Wexler Friedman, according to a filing in U.S. District Court.

The filing offers no explanation for the switch. Dennis Vacco, a partner in the Buffalo firm, declined to comment Wednesday. DLA Piper issued a statement confirming it had withdrawn from the case, but it declined further comment, citing attorney-client privilege.

The two sides are due in court Thursday for a hearing on whether Facebook and its team of forensics experts should have immediate access to Ceglia's computers and the original documents he contends entitle him to a 50 percent share of Zuckerberg's interest in Facebook.

The documents include a 2003 "work for hire" contract bearing the names of Ceglia and Zuckerberg, who was at the time a Harvard University student developing the website, and a series of emails Ceglia says the two exchanged in 2003 and 2004.

Ceglia, in turn, wants access to email exchanges with Zuckerberg

captured from Zuckerberg's Harvard account.

Zuckerberg's lawyers say Ceglia should produce his material before seeing the Harvard emails.

"These indisputably genuine emails directly contradict Ceglia's make-believe narrative and demonstrate that Ceglia's story is a lie," Facebook attorney Orin Snyder wrote in a court filing.

Ceglia says he and Zuckerberg met and signed the agreement in the lobby of the Radisson Hotel in Boston on April 28, 2003, after Zuckerberg responded to his Craigslist help-wanted ad for work on a street-mapping database Ceglia was creating. According to the lawsuit, Ceglia paid Zuckerberg \$1,000 to work on the streets project and gave him another \$1,000 after Zuckerberg told him about his Facebook idea, with the condition Ceglia would get half if it took off.

The emails document discussions about the arrangement, according to Ceglia.

Ceglia could not be reached Wednesday to comment on the change of attorneys, the second such switch since he began his legal case last year. A telephone listing for his home in Wellsville was not in service.

A statement from Lake's office confirmed he had been hired to "bring this case to trial." Lake, who was en route to Buffalo on Wednesday, was expected to issue a statement later, his office said.

Both sides in the federal court case have enlisted multiple experts to weigh in on the authenticity of Ceglia's documents.

One Facebook expert, after scrutinizing the type on the contract, called it an "amateurish forgery," while a Ceglia expert said Ceglia had passed a

lie detector test when asked whether he'd forged or fabricated it.

Facebook also hired a private investigator to identify "issues that might reflect on Ceglia's reputation, character and credibility," according to legal filings. The investigator's report listed, among other things, a 1997 conviction in Texas for possession of hallucinogenic mushrooms, a 2005 no contest plea to trespassing in Florida and a 2009 petition by the New York Attorney General's office accusing Ceglia and his wife of defrauding customers of their wood pellet business by accepting upfront payment for pellets they never delivered.

"While I have made some mistakes in my life, I accept responsibility for those actions," Ceglia wrote in a declaration filed with the court, in which he suggested Zuckerberg also take a polygraph exam "to expose who is really telling the truth."

"This case and the tactics of Mark and Facebook have taken and continue to take a terrible toll on me, my wife, our two sons and even our parents," he wrote.

Palo Alto, Calif.-based [Facebook](#) Inc. is expected file for an initial public offering sometime next year. The company says it has more than 500 million users, but that figure has not been updated for nearly a year. In January, an infusion from Goldman Sachs valued the company at \$50 billion.

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