



A \$59 Million Trade Secret Verdict Just Got Cut to \$10.4 Million. Here's Why.

A jury awards \$59 million. The judge slashes it to \$10.4 million. That is what happens when your damages methodology cannot survive scrutiny.

Sonrai Systems sued The Heil Co. in 2016, alleging Heil poached a key executive and used him to replicate Sonrai's proprietary platform. In June 2025, a jury returned \$29 million in compensatory damages and \$30 million in punitive damages. U.S. District Judge Thomas Durkin reduced the total to \$10.4 million on remittitur.

Sonrai's damages expert built her lost profits model from depositions and invoices rather than actual financial records. The court found it "all the more peculiar" that after six years of discovery, no one could explain why those records were never produced. While the court accepted lost profits projections for one customer, it found assumptions about fleetwide rollout at Waste Management and Republic "far too speculative."

What Employers Should Take Away:

- **Financial records are not optional.** Expert opinions built on depositions alone are vulnerable. If you claim lost profits, you need the documentation.
- **Speculative projections will get cut.** Proving damages for one customer does not extend to others without concrete evidence.
- **Punitive damages have limits, even for bad actors.** Do not assume bad facts mean runaway verdicts survive post-trial motions.
- **Protect your people, protect your secrets.** Robust departure protocols and careful hiring practices remain the best defense on both sides of these disputes.

The bottom line: a \$59 million verdict means nothing if your proof cannot survive judicial review. But defendants should note that even after an 82% reduction, \$10.4 million remained on the table.

For questions about trade secret litigation or executive departure protocols, contact Ved Chitale at vchitale@andrewsmyers.com.

For further information on these developments, please contact [Ved Chitale](#).