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### Bell corruption case 'unfair, politically motivated' and should be dismissed, defense attorney says

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As the preliminary hearing for the six current and former Bell City Council members accused of corruption wound down Wednesday, the attorney for George Cole argued prosecutors had not made a case and all charges should be dropped.

Ronald Kaye told Superior Court Judge Henry J. Hall the case was “unfair, politically motivated and an unjust prosecution, and it should stop now.”

He said that if the \$100,000 that Bell leaders earned at the peak of their salaries was too much money, the solution was to vote them out of office, not to put them on trial.

Walking back and forth in the courtroom and leaning on a lectern, Kaye called the alleged wrongdoing in Bell “one of the most publicized municipal scandals in Los Angeles County, albeit in the United States.”

Kaye said all six of the former and current city leaders had become victims of the Bell salary scandal. “All of a sudden they are dragged into the court, dragged into the media as being these pariahs.”

He also dismissed the testimony of one of the prosecutions' key witnesses, City Clerk Rebecca Valdez, as being "completely vacant." Valdez and one of the city's top financial officials, Lourdes Garcia, were granted limited immunity in exchange for their testimony.

Kaye said the defendants could not have been in a conspiracy with Robert Rizzo, Bell's former chief administrative officer, to loot the city because witnesses testified that Rizzo kept information from them and ordered his staff to report back to him about any interactions with council members.

The Los Angeles County district attorney's office accuses the former and current council members of driving up their salaries by drawing pay for their service on boards and commissions that rarely met.

Several defense attorneys said Wednesday they expect Hall to rule by the end of the day whether the defendants should be tried. A preliminary hearing for Rizzo and his assistant, Angela Spaccia, is expected to open Tuesday.

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-- Jeff Gottlieb and Corina Knoll

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