

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA**

FILED  
CLERK, U.S. DISTRICT COURT  
OCT 29, 2018  
CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA  
BY: BH DEPUTY

Julio C. Alas, et al.

Plaintiff,

v.

AT&T Inc., et al.,

Defendant.

LACV 17-08106-VAP (RAOx)

**Order re Defendants' Motion to  
Dismiss the Second Amended  
Class Complaint**

**(Doc. No. 71.)**

United States District Court  
Central District of California

On November 6, 2017, Plaintiffs Julio C. Alas, Robert J. Bugielski, and Chad S. Simecek ("Plaintiffs") individually as participants in the AT&T Retirement Savings Plan (the "Plan") and as representatives of all persons similarly situated, filed the Second Amended Class Complaint ("SAC") under the Employment Retirement Income Security Act ("ERISA"), 28 U.S.C. §§ 1132(a)(2) and (3), against Defendants AT&T, Inc.,<sup>1</sup> AT&T Services, and John Does 1-50 ("Defendants"), for Defendants' alleged breach of their fiduciary duties and transactions prohibited by ERISA. (Doc. No. 68.)

On August 27, 2018, Defendants filed the pending Motion to Dismiss the Second Amended Class Complaint, pursuant to Federal Rules of Civil Procedure 12(b)(1) and 12(b)(6). (Doc. No. 71.) Plaintiffs filed their

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<sup>1</sup> The SAC asserts claims against AT&T, Inc., even though on December 21, 2017, the parties filed a stipulation to dismiss AT&T, Inc. from this suit. (Doc. No. 28.)

1 Opposition on September 24, 2018, (Doc. No. 76), and Defendants filed  
2 their Reply on October 8, 2018 (Doc. No. 77).

3  
4 After considering all papers filed in support of and in opposition to  
5 Defendants' Motion, the Court rules as follows.

6  
7 **I. SUMMARY OF ALLEGATIONS**

8 Plaintiffs have held various positions at AT&T, Inc., and all are  
9 participants in the Plan, a defined contribution employee pension benefit  
10 plan under 29 U.S.C. § 1002(2)A) and § 1002(34). (SAC ¶¶ 20-22, 12.)  
11 The Plan is one of the largest retirement plans in the country, ranking in the  
12 top 0.1% of American 401(k) plans, and with 241,414 active participants and  
13 \$34.792 billion in net assets as of December 31, 2016. (*Id.* ¶ 3.) The Plan  
14 is funded by a combination of salary withholding by its participants and  
15 employer matching contributions. (*Id.* ¶ 32.) Participant accounts in the  
16 Plan consist of employee contributions, employer contributions, and any  
17 investment income from the investment options selected within the  
18 participant account, minus fees and expenses. (*Id.* ¶ 33.)

19  
20 Defendants chose Fidelity Investments Institutional Operations  
21 Company, LLC ("Fidelity") to provide the Plan's recordkeeping and  
22 administrative services, and Fidelity Brokerage Services, LLC, to provide  
23 self-directed brokerage accounts to Plan participants through Fidelity's  
24 trademarked BrokerageLink® service. (*Id.* ¶ 42-43.) Defendants chose  
25 Financial Engines Advisors LLC ("Financial Engines") to provide  
26 individualized computer-based investment advice to Plan participants. (*Id.* ¶

1 44.) In light of the Plan’s vast size and the fierce competition among  
2 recordkeeping service providers, the Plan “had the bargaining power to  
3 obtain and maintain very low fees for recordkeeping and other  
4 administrative services, and had significant leverage to procure high quality  
5 management and administrative services at a low cost.” (*Id.* ¶ 48.)  
6 Beginning no later than 2012, however, Defendants failed to leverage the  
7 Plan’s size to obtain reasonable recordkeeping fees or review Fidelity’s total  
8 compensation, and consequently paid fees that were significantly above  
9 market rate, costing Plan participants “tens of millions of dollars in  
10 unnecessary recordkeeping expenses during the class period.” (*Id.* ¶¶ 49-  
11 66.)

12  
13 Plaintiffs allege that these failures “were not simple imprudence but  
14 were motivated in part by Defendants’ self-interest,” as AT&T chose Fidelity  
15 for its own benefit, rather than for the benefit of the Plan’s participants. (*Id.*  
16 ¶¶ 70, 73.) AT&T and Fidelity had a “larger agreement” in which Plan  
17 participants paid high rates for Fidelity’s services to the Plan, while Fidelity  
18 provided discounts on services to other employee benefit plans, resulting in  
19 cost savings for AT&T. (*Id.* ¶ 75.)

20  
21 Through BrokerageLink, Fidelity allowed Plan participants to invest in  
22 a wide range of mutual funds that are not included among the Plans’  
23 designated investment alternatives through an account that is referred to as  
24 a “brokerage window” or “self-directed brokerage account.” (*Id.* ¶ 77.) Plan  
25 participants who used BrokerageLink compensated Fidelity through a  
26 variety of brokerage fees. (*Id.* ¶ 78.) Defendants controlled the mutual

1 funds that would be offered to the Plan’s participants through BrokerageLink  
2 and offered “retail shares” of certain mutual funds, even when less  
3 expensive “institutional shares” of the same fund were also available. (*Id.* ¶  
4 81-84.) Qualified retirement plans are generally eligible to purchase  
5 institutional class shares where available, and the vast size of the Plan  
6 should have enabled it to obtain the lowest price share class of any mutual  
7 fund on the market. (*Id.* ¶¶ 85-87.) While retail shares were more  
8 expensive for Plan members to purchase, they provided “significant  
9 additional compensation to Fidelity” in the form of millions of dollars in  
10 revenue sharing payments. (*Id.* ¶¶ 86, 88.) Defendants did not take this  
11 additional money into account when monitoring Fidelity’s total  
12 compensation, and did not disclose this information to Plan participants,  
13 much less use it to offset Fidelity’s direct compensation that users paid in  
14 the form of transaction fees. (*Id.* ¶¶ 92-93.)  
15

16 In 2015, the Plan also introduced participants to Financial Engines,  
17 which offers automated investment advice to participants. (*Id.* ¶¶ 96-97.)  
18 This merely required Fidelity to provide a secure communications link from  
19 participants’ accounts to Financial Engines, but Fidelity received millions of  
20 dollars each year for this “fixed level of service.” (*Id.* ¶¶ 98-102.)  
21 Defendants similarly failed to take this into account when determining  
22 Fidelity’s aggregate compensation. (*Id.* ¶ 103.) Plaintiffs allege that  
23 because Financial Engines provided services to Fidelity for less than was  
24 being charged to Plan participants who subscribed to that service, it  
25 amounted to an “illegal kickback to Fidelity.” (*Id.* ¶ 104.)  
26

1 If a retirement plan has 100 or more participants, it must file a “Form  
2 5500,” listing every service provider receiving more than \$5,000, and listing  
3 the direct and indirect compensation that the provider received. (*Id.* ¶ 105.)  
4 Defendants did not report Fidelity’s indirect compensation from the Plan’s  
5 use of BrokerageLink or Financial Engines, a violation of their reporting  
6 obligations. (*Id.* ¶ 110.) The complex, misleading nature of the 5500s  
7 could not have provided the average participant in the Plan with “actual  
8 knowledge of the breach or violation” Plaintiffs allege, and no Plaintiff was  
9 aware of Defendants’ breaches until November 3, 2017. (*Id.* ¶¶ 114-115.)  
10

11 Based on the foregoing, Plaintiffs now assert three claims against  
12 Defendants: (1) Breaches of Fiduciary Duties of Prudence and Candor and  
13 Prohibited Transactions, in violation of ERISA § 404(a), 29 U.S.C. § 1104(a);  
14 (2) Prohibited Transactions, in violation of ERISA § 406(a), 29 U.S.C. §  
15 1106(a); and Breaches of Fiduciary Duties of Prudence and Candor and  
16 Self-Dealing Prohibited Transactions, in violation of ERISA §§ 404(a),  
17 406(b)(1), 29 U.S.C. §§ 1104(a), 1106(b)(1). (*Id.* ¶¶ 141-162.)  
18

## 19 II. LEGAL STANDARD

### 20 A. Rule 12(b)(1)

21 Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(1) authorizes a party to seek  
22 dismissal of an action for lack of subject matter jurisdiction. “Because  
23 standing and ripeness pertain to federal courts’ subject matter jurisdiction,  
24 they are properly raised in a Rule 12(b)(1) motion to dismiss.” *Chandler v.*  
25 *State Farm Mut. Auto. Ins. Co.*, 598 F.3d 1115, 1122 (9th Cir. 2010). In the  
26

1 context of a 12(b)(1) motion, the plaintiff has the burden of establishing  
2 Article III standing to assert the claims. *Id.*

3  
4 Although the default standard for a Rule 12(b)(1) motion made at the  
5 pleading stage is to accept the plaintiff's allegations as true, limited  
6 exceptions exist. Relevant here is the exception created by the distinction  
7 between "facial" and "factual" attacks on subject matter jurisdiction. See  
8 *Leite v. Crane Co.*, 749 F.3d 1117, 1121 (9th Cir. 2014). A facial attack  
9 accepts the factual allegations as pleaded, but "asserts that [they] are  
10 insufficient on their face to invoke federal jurisdiction." *Safe Air for Everyone*  
11 *v. Meyer*, 373 F.3d 1035, 1039 (9th Cir. 2004). A factual attack, in contrast,  
12 "disputes the truth of the allegations that, by themselves, would otherwise  
13 invoke federal jurisdiction." *Id.* Here, as Defendants do not contest the truth  
14 of the jurisdictional allegations in the FAC, their Motion is a facial attack that  
15 the Court resolves "as it would a motion to dismiss under Rule 12(b)(6):  
16 Accepting the plaintiff's allegations as true and drawing all reasonable  
17 inferences in the plaintiff's favor, the court determines whether the  
18 allegations are sufficient to invoke the court's jurisdiction." *Leite*, 749 F.3d at  
19 1121 (citing *Pride v. Correa*, 719 F.3d 1130, 1133 (9th Cir. 2013)).

20  
21 As Article III of the United States Constitution empowers federal  
22 courts to hear only "cases" and "controversies" (see U.S. Const. art. III, § 2),  
23 matters must satisfy the various justiciability criteria, like standing,  
24 developed for determining whether a matter is a case or controversy. To  
25 satisfy "the irreducible constitutional minimum of standing," the plaintiff must  
26 demonstrate: (1) he has suffered an "injury in fact"—an invasion of a  
legally protected interest which is (a) concrete and particularized, and (b)

1 actual or imminent, not conjectural or hypothetical; (2) there is a causal  
2 connection between the injury and the conduct complained of — that is, the  
3 injury is “fairly traceable” to the challenged action of the defendant, and not  
4 the result of the independent action of some third party not before the court;  
5 and (3) it is “likely,” as opposed to merely “speculative,” that the injury will be  
6 redressed by a favorable judicial decision. *Lujan v. Defenders of Wildlife*,  
7 504 U.S. 555, 560-61 (1992).

8 A suit brought by a plaintiff without Article III standing is not a “case or  
9 controversy,” and an Article III federal court therefore lacks subject matter  
10 jurisdiction over the suit. *Cetacean Cmty. v. Bush*, 386 F.3d 1169, 1174 (9th  
11 Cir. 2004) (citing *Steel Co. v. Citizens for a Better Env't*, 523 U.S. 83, 101  
12 (1998)). In that event, the suit should be dismissed under Rule 12(b)(1). *Id.*  
13 (citing *Steel Co.*, 523 U.S. at 109–10; *Warren v. Fox Family Worldwide, Inc.*,  
14 328 F.3d 1136, 1140 (9th Cir. 2003); *Scott v. Pasadena Unified Sch. Dist.*,  
15 306 F.3d 646, 664 (9th Cir. 2002)).

16 **B. Rule 12(b)(6)**

17 Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6) allows a party to bring a  
18 motion to dismiss for failure to state a claim upon which relief can be  
19 granted. Rule 12(b)(6) is read along with Rule 8(a), which requires a short,  
20 plain statement upon which a pleading shows entitlement to relief. Fed. R.  
21 Civ. P. 8(a)(2); *Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 555 (2007). When  
22 evaluating a Rule 12(b)(6) motion, a court must accept all material  
23 allegations in the complaint—as well as any reasonable inferences to be  
24 drawn from them—as true and construe them in the light most favorable to  
25 the non-moving party. See *Doe v. United States*, 419 F.3d 1058, 1062 (9th  
26 Cir. 2005).

1  
2           “While a complaint attacked by a Rule 12(b)(6) motion to dismiss  
3 does not need detailed factual allegations, a plaintiff’s obligation to provide  
4 the ‘grounds’ of his ‘entitlement to relief’ requires more than labels and  
5 conclusions, and a formulaic recitation of the elements of a cause of action  
6 will not do.” *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 555 (citations omitted). Rather, the  
7 allegations in the complaint “must be enough to raise a right to relief above  
8 the speculative level.” *Id.*

9  
10           To survive a motion to dismiss, a plaintiff must allege “enough facts to  
11 state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.” *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at  
12 570; *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 697 (2009). “The plausibility standard  
13 is not akin to a ‘probability requirement,’ but it asks for more than a sheer  
14 possibility that a defendant has acted unlawfully. Where a complaint pleads  
15 facts that are ‘merely consistent with’ a defendant’s liability, it stops short of  
16 the line between possibility and plausibility of ‘entitlement to relief.’” *Iqbal*,  
17 556 U.S. at 678 (quoting *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 556).

18  
19           The Ninth Circuit has clarified that (1) a complaint must “contain  
20 sufficient allegations of underlying facts to give fair notice and to enable the  
21 opposing party to defend itself effectively” and (2) “the factual allegations  
22 that are taken as true must plausibly suggest an entitlement to relief, such  
23 that it is not unfair to require the opposing party to be subjected to the  
24 expense of discovery and continued litigation.” *Starr v. Baca*, 652 F. 3d  
25 1202, 1216 (9th Cir. 2011).

26



### III. DISCUSSION

Defendants seek dismissal of the SAC under Rules 12(b)(1) and 12(b)(6) on the following grounds: (1) Plaintiffs lack standing; (2) the BrokerageLink claim is untimely; (3) Plaintiffs fail to state a claim; and (4) AT&T Inc. and the Doe Defendants are not appropriate defendants. (Doc. No. 71-1.)

#### A. Plaintiffs' Standing

Defendants argue that Plaintiffs lack standing to bring their claims as to both BrokerageLink and the Form 5500s. (Doc. No. 71-1 at 12-15.) A plaintiff establishes standing by demonstrating (1) an "injury in fact" that is "concrete and particularized" and "actual or imminent, not conjectural or hypothetical"; (2) a "causal connection between the injury" and the challenged action of the defendants; and (3) that is "likely, as opposed to merely speculative, that the injury will be redressed by a favorable decision." *Multistar Industries, Inc. v. U.S. Dept. of Transp.*, 707 F.3d 1045, 1054 (9th Cir. 2013) (quoting *Lujan*, 504 U.S. at 560-61).

In *Glanton ex rel. ALCOA Prescription Drug Plan v. Advance PCS Inc.*, the Ninth Circuit clarified the standing requirements for ERISA plaintiffs. 465 F.3d 1123 (9th Cir. 2006). The panel in *Glanton* considered whether the plaintiffs, one of whom participated in the defendant's prescription drug plan, had standing to sue the defendant for breach of fiduciary duty under ERISA. *Id.* at 1124-25. The plaintiffs, none of whom claimed they were denied benefits or received inferior drugs, claimed the defendant "charged the plans too much for drugs, and this caused the plans to demand higher co-

1 payments and contributions from participants.” *Id.* at 1125. The panel  
2 ultimately concluded that the plaintiffs lacked standing because they had  
3 failed to demonstrate redressability. *Id.* In rejecting the plaintiffs’ arguments  
4 that they had associational standing, the panel noted that ERISA plan  
5 beneficiaries could bring suits on behalf of the plan in a representative  
6 capacity “so long as plaintiffs otherwise meet the requirements for Article III  
7 standing.” *Id.* at 1127.

### 8 9 **1. BrokerageLink**

10 Defendants argue that Plaintiffs lack standing to claim that the Plan  
11 should have negotiated institutional pricing for mutual funds offered by  
12 BrokerageLink, as Mr. Bugielski, the only Plaintiff to use BrokerageLink,  
13 “has no concrete injury that is fairly traceable to Defendants and that can be  
14 redressed by this Court.” (Doc. No. 77-1 at 13.) Plaintiffs contend that the  
15 purportedly excessive fees that Mr. Bugielski paid are both concrete and  
16 redressable. (Doc. No. 76 at 12-14.) Plaintiffs contend that Mr. Bugielski  
17 paid high transaction fees that were “clearly excessive considering the  
18 millions of dollars Fidelity was receiving through revenue sharing.” (SAC at  
19 ¶ 77). The bulk of the SAC’s allegations concerning BrokerageLink,  
20 however, discuss the inability of Plan participants to purchase less  
21 expensive institutional class mutual fund shares, as opposed to more  
22 expensive retail shares. (*Id.* at ¶¶ 81-88.) Although the SAC does not  
23 allege that Mr. Bugielski personally invested in mutual funds, it does note  
24 that the retail shares purchased by investors other than Plaintiffs resulted in  
25 “millions of dollars of revenue sharing payments.” (*Id.* at ¶ 88.) Plaintiffs  
26 then aver that revenue sharing payments often are “used to reduce the

1 aggregate administrative expense of the plan as a benefit to all  
2 participants.” (*Id.* at ¶¶89).

3  
4 Even when considered alongside the SAC’s discussion of the mutual  
5 funds available through BrokerageLink and the alleged “larger agreement”  
6 between Defendants and Fidelity, (*id.* ¶ 75), the bare allegation that the  
7 transaction fees were excessive is akin to a label or conclusion, see  
8 *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 555, as opposed to a plausible inference that Mr.  
9 Bugielski suffered a concrete injury.

10  
11 As noted in its previous Order, (Doc. No. 67 at 11), the court in  
12 *Marshall v. Northrop Grumman Corp.*, No. CV 16-06795 AB (JCx), 2017 WL  
13 2930839, at \*8-9 (C.D. Cal. Jan 30, 2017), reached the same conclusion. In  
14 *Marshall*, the complaint did not allege that any named plaintiff invested in  
15 the fund at issue, but did allege that plan participants bore the cost of  
16 mismanagement of the funds. *Id.* at \*8. The court reasoned that “although  
17 the management fees may have been borne by all Plan participants such  
18 that Plaintiffs could assert a cognizable injury, the alleged performance  
19 losses were sustained by only those who invested in [a particular fund].” *Id.*  
20 Thus, the court concluded “[a]t least as to this latter allegation, Plaintiffs  
21 have not alleged they individually invested in that fund such that they have  
22 suffered a concrete injury.” *Id.*

23  
24 Accordingly, the Court GRANTS Defendants’ Motion to Dismiss as to  
25 the SAC’s allegations regarding BrokerageLink, with leave to amend, and  
26

1 declines to rule on the parties' arguments regarding the timeliness of the  
2 claim.

3  
4 **2. Form 5500s**

5 Defendants also contend that Plaintiffs do not have standing to assert  
6 claims regarding the challenged disclosures on the Plan's Form 5500s, as  
7 any inaccurate 5500 disclosures did not harm Plaintiffs "in any concrete  
8 way." (Doc. No. 77-1 at 14-15.) Courts commonly hold that plaintiffs  
9 seeking purely injunctive remedies of ERISA's disclosure requirements do  
10 not need to demonstrate actual injury, however.

11  
12 The Ninth Circuit has found that a requirement that plaintiffs prove  
13 individual harm when seeking injunctive relief "would be to say that the  
14 fiduciaries are free to ignore their duties so long as they do no tangible  
15 harm," a result that "is not supported by the language of ERISA, the  
16 common law, or common sense." *Shaver v. Operating Engineers Local 428*  
17 *Pension Trust Fund*, 332 F.3d 1198, 1203 (9th Cir. 2003). See also *Central*  
18 *States Southeast and Southwest Areas Health and Welfare Fund v. Merck-*  
19 *Medco Managed Care, L.L.C.*, 433 F.3d 181, 199 (2d Cir. 2005) (A "plan  
20 participant may have Article III standing to obtain injunctive relief related to  
21 ERISA's disclosure and fiduciary duty requirements without a showing of  
22 individual harm to the participant"); *Horvath v. Keystone Health Plan East,*  
23 *Inc.*, 333 F.3d 450, 456 (3d Cir. 2003) (finding that ERISA's "statutorily-  
24 created disclosure or fiduciary responsibilities" do not require plaintiffs  
25 seeking injunctive relief to show "actual harm" in order to have standing);  
26 *Wells v. California Physicians' Serv.*, No. C05-01229 CRB, 2007 WL

1 926490, at \*3 (N.D. Cal. Mar. 26, 2007) (“When plan participants seek  
2 injunctive relief for violations of ERISA's disclosure or fiduciary  
3 requirements, they can demonstrate Article III standing by showing a  
4 violation of ERISA and need not prove actual injury.”)  
5

6 Plaintiffs thus have standing to allege that Defendants did not report  
7 all indirect compensation on the Form 5500s, a violation of their reporting  
8 obligations under ERISA's disclosure requirements. (SAC ¶¶ 110, 147.)  
9 Accordingly, the Court DENIES Defendants’ Motion to Dismiss Plaintiffs’  
10 claims to injunctive relief regarding the Form 5500s.

11 **B. Plaintiffs Have Stated a Claim**

12 Defendants also argue that Plaintiffs fail to state a claim for the  
13 breaches of fiduciary duty. (Doc. No. 71-1 at 10-21.) ERISA requires a  
14 fiduciary to discharge duties “solely in the interest of the participants and  
15 beneficiaries” and solely for the purposes of “providing benefits to  
16 participants and their beneficiaries” while “defraying reasonable expenses of  
17 administering the plan.” 29 U.S.C.A. § 1104(a)(1)(A). This must be done  
18 “with the care, skill, prudence, and diligence under the circumstances then  
19 prevailing” that a person or institution “acting in a like capacity and familiar  
20 with such matters would use in the conduct of an enterprise of a like  
21 character and with like aims.” *Id.* § 1104(a)(1)(B). ERISA also “explicitly  
22 prohibits a fiduciary from engaging in self-dealing transactions.” *Howard v.*  
23 *Shay*, 100 F.3d 1484, 1488 (9th Cir. 1996) (citing 29 U.S.C. § 1106(b)).  
24  
25  
26

United States District Court  
Central District of California

1 Defendants correctly note that courts do not take a results-based  
2 approach when determining if a defendant has breached these duties.  
3 (Doc. No. 71-1 at 17). The relevant inquiry examines a fiduciary’s conduct.  
4 See *White v. Chevron Corp.*, No. 16-CV-0793-PJH, 2017 WL 2352137, at \*4  
5 (N.D. Cal. May 31, 2017); see also *Donovan v. Mazzola*, 716 F.2d 1226,  
6 1232 (9th Cir. 1983) (analyzing if a fiduciary “employed the appropriate  
7 methods” when investing on behalf of trustees). The SAC in large part  
8 simply recounts fees that Plaintiffs believe were too high, and concedes that  
9 Plaintiffs cannot demonstrate the levels “of review or investigation”  
10 Defendants undertook. (SAC ¶¶ 92.)

11  
12 The Ninth Circuit has acknowledged, however, that “circumstances  
13 surrounding alleged breaches of fiduciary duty may frequently defy  
14 particularized identification at the pleading stage” because plaintiffs may not  
15 “be in a position to describe with particularity the events constituting the  
16 alleged misconduct.” *Concha v. London*, 62 F.3d 1493, 1503 (9th Cir. 1995).  
17 The Court finds that Plaintiffs are in just such a position. Defendants  
18 maintain that “even if Plaintiffs do not have to plead facts about the fiduciary  
19 process directly, they still must plead facts that plausibly suggest that the  
20 fiduciary process was defective.” (Doc. No. 77 at 11). Here, Plaintiffs have  
21 done so through their allegations that Plan participants paid excessive  
22 administrative costs, and that Defendants received a discount on  
23 administrative services in exchange for allowing Fidelity to overcharge Plan  
24 participants as part of a “larger agreement.”

1 As the Court must accept Plaintiffs' allegations as true, rather than  
2 "look beyond the complaint and make a factual determination based on  
3 incomplete evidence," *Wylar Summit Partnership v. Turner Broad. System,*  
4 *Inc.*, 135 F.3d 658, 664 (9th Cir. 1998), the Court concludes it is plausible  
5 that the Defendants breached their fiduciary duties. Accordingly,  
6 Defendants' Motion to Dismiss the SAC for failure to state a claim as to  
7 breaches of fiduciary duty is DENIED.

8  
9 **C. AT&T Inc. and John Does 1-50 Are Dismissed**

10 Finally, Defendant argues that AT&T Inc. and the John Does should  
11 be dismissed from the case. (Doc. No. 71-1 at 29-32.) The Court agrees.

12  
13 **1. AT&T Inc.**

14 AT&T Services is the administrator of the plan and the named  
15 fiduciary, (SAC ¶¶ 122), AT&T Inc. is the plan's sponsor, (SAC ¶¶ 126).  
16 Sponsorship of a plan does necessarily not confer fiduciary status. See  
17 *CIGNA Corp. v. Amara*, 563 U.S. 421, 437, (2011) (finding that "ERISA  
18 carefully distinguishes" the roles of plan sponsor and administrator).  
19 Plaintiffs allege that AT&T Inc. took on a fiduciary role by selecting  
20 committee members overseeing the Plan, (SAC ¶¶ 126). The fiduciary duty  
21 of a sponsor appointing another entity to administer a plan, however, is  
22 limited to monitoring and reviewing the performance of the appointee. *In re*  
23 *Computer Scis. Corp. Erisa Litig.*, 635 F. Supp. 2d 1128, 1144 (C.D. Cal.  
24 2009); see also *Marshall v. Northrop Grumman Corp.*, No. CV 16-06794 AB,  
25 2017 WL 2930839, at \*12 (C.D. Cal. Jan. 30, 2017) (finding that the duties  
26 of an entity appointing fiduciaries are limited to the discretionary authority it

1 exercises over the management of a plan). While Plaintiffs argue that it “is  
2 black-letter law that a corporate officer, authorized to sign a promissory not  
3 on behalf of the corporation, does not incur personal liability on the debt,”  
4 Plaintiffs’ Opposition cites no authority for the proposition that AT&T Inc. had  
5 any fiduciary responsibility for the Plan other than appointing and monitoring  
6 committee members.

7  
8 As Plaintiffs have alleged no facts suggesting AT&T Inc. improperly  
9 appointed or neglected to monitor committee members overseeing the Plan,  
10 the Court GRANTS Plaintiffs’ Motion dismissing AT&T Inc., with leave to  
11 amend.

12  
13 **2. John Does 1-50**

14 Similarly, Plaintiffs have named 50 John Does as individual  
15 defendants in this action, but have alleged no facts demonstrating any  
16 plausible liability for individual defendants, as they must in order to bring an  
17 ERISA claim against a fiduciary in their individual capacity. *See, e.g.,*  
18 *Spinedex Physical Therapy USA Inc. v. United Healthcare of Arizona, Inc.*,  
19 770 F.3d 1282, 1297 (9th Cir. 2014) Plaintiffs’ Opposition to Defendants’  
20 Motion to Dismiss again cites no authority in arguing that the John Does  
21 should remain as Defendants, other than it not being “nefarious, or  
22 prejudicial, or even burdensome.” (Doc. No. 76 at 31.)

23  
24 Accordingly, the Court GRANTS Plaintiffs’ Motion dismissing John  
25 Does 1-50, with leave to amend.  
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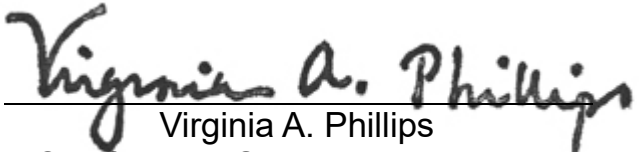


**IV. CONCLUSION**

For the reasons stated above, Defendant’s Motion to Dismiss the Second Amended Complaint is GRANTED IN PART and DENIED IN PART. Should Plaintiffs wish to file an amended pleading, they must do so by November 12, 2018.

**IT IS SO ORDERED.**

Dated: 10/29/18

  
Virginia A. Phillips  
Chief United States District Judge

United States District Court  
Central District of California

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