

Press Release

Bucher Law PLLC Secures Another Antitrust Victory Against Valve for Steam's Monopolization of the PC Game Distribution Market. Total Amount Awarded in Arbitrations Exceeds \$2 Million to Date.

On September 3, 2025, Mr. Fish, an Ohio consumer and Steam user, won treble damages awards in their arbitrations against Valve, owner of Steam, the dominant distribution platform for PC games. Mr. Fish was awarded \$3,048.54 in damages. These damages arose from Valve's illegal monopoly of the PC game distribution market and Valve's illegal agreements with developers that prevent competition in the space.

Specifically, Mr. Fish's arbitrator found:

- that Steam does “hold and maintain monopoly power in the PC video game digital distribution market.”
- that “through its agreements with developers and publishers, [Valve] had the power to and did enforce ‘price parity’ restrictions, ‘post and hold’ restrictions, and discounting rules by forcing the said developers and publishers to adjust the prices of their games on other distribution platforms.”
- “That [Valve's] market power enabled it to enforce its agreements to influence market prices.”
- “that if persuasion failed, [Valve's] threats to cease distributing a particular game would effectively coerce developers to comply with its demands.”
- That Valve had “actual control of PC game prices charged by competitors through its manipulation of, and agreements with developers and publishers, its efforts to exclude competitors, and its control of competitors' output and supply through its ability to grant or deny Steam Keys.”
- Finally, that gamers “did, in fact, pay inflated prices for PC games purchased on Steam.”

Valve employed many law firms and close to 100 attorneys over its years-long campaign to prevent Mr. Fish and consumers like him from obtaining the compensation they are owed. Valve's corporate attorneys argued that its anticompetitive conduct was necessary in order for Steam to be able to compete. However, the arbitrator found “that they were not persuasive.” Moreover, “[Valve's] witnesses uniformly presented what appeared to be rehearsed explanations for the company's conduct that were at odds with the anticompetitive goals and effects expressed in their written communications.”

Mr. Fish filed his claim under the Sherman Antitrust Act, for Valve's violations of both Section 1 of the Sherman Act, which prohibits agreements and conspiracies that restrain competition, and Section 2 of the Sherman Act, which prohibits monopolization. Mr. Fish prevailed on both claims. Mr. Fish's award of \$3,048.54 amounts to approximately 54% of his lifetime PC game purchases from Steam. In addition to these damages, Valve was ordered to pay attorneys' fees, which were substantial.

Antitrust cases are known to be some of the most complex and fact-intensive claims in American law, and Valve made every effort to delay Mr. Fish's case and deny him justice. Valve's delays led the arbitrator to award additional interest based on her finding that Valve engaged in this conduct "primarily for the purpose of delaying the litigation or increasing the cost thereof."

Mr. Fish is one of a growing number of consumers who have recovered substantial money from Valve as the result of their illegal monopoly and the higher prices Valve facilitates. To date, Bucher Law PLLC clients have cumulatively secured awards totaling more than \$2 million, inclusive of attorneys' fees.

This represents another victory for PC gamers who have been deprived of a competitive PC game distribution market for years. But the vast majority of arbitrations filed against Valve remain pending. Although past results do not guarantee similar outcomes, Bucher Law PLLC is committed to litigating the claims of consumers like Mr. Fish in the years and decades to come.

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