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And the Lawyers Get Rich

By Post Editorial Board

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The de Blasio administration has contributed to the record \$732 million to be paid back in settlements across New York City.

Turns out the \$41 million the de Blasio administration agreed on to settle the Central Park 5 case is only a fraction of the city's lawsuit bonanza.

According to city Comptroller Scott Stringer's annual report, the amount City Hall paid out in legal settlements and judgments the last fiscal year rose 40 percent, to a record \$732 million. Fully 60 percent of that figure came under de Blasio.

The real number, moreover, is even higher, given how the de Blasio administration used an accounting trick to hide an \$87 million settlement involving the Fire Department as back pay.

Altogether, the city's legal costs add up to nearly 1 percent of the city budget, according to Bloomberg News. That's more than the city spends on parks, recreation and libraries — combined. Which is a pretty revealing figure for a mayor who has made "parks equality" one of his crusades.

Now, Bill de Blasio is not the first mayor to prefer settling for millions rather than fight suits in the courts. Mike Bloomberg, saying he was "not a particularly litigious kind of person," began quietly settling lawsuits filed by advocacy groups, a policy The Post took issue with in 2002.

But Bloomberg also insisted he would fight for the "big things," and he pretty much kept that promise.

Carol Kellerman of the Citizens Budget Commission notes it's one thing to clear up a legal backlog by resolving longstanding legal issues. It's something else again to send a message that if you sue the city, you can expect a windfall with the taxpayers' money.

So if the city's lawyers treat Mayor Bill as Santa Claus this year, we now know why.