

CUSTOM CONTENT

MAY 26, 2025

# WOMEN OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS



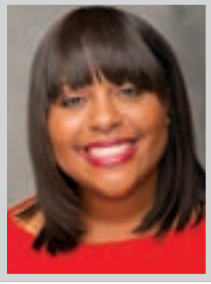
**W**ELCOME TO THE 2025 EDITION OF THE LOS ANGELES BUSINESS JOURNAL'S SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT HONORING the region's most influential women legal professionals, *Women of Influence: Attorneys*.

There are some particularly stellar attorneys in Los Angeles who happen to be women and we've alphabetically listed some of the very best of them here, along with details about their careers, practices and relevant recent successes they've achieved.

The women covered in these pages have been recognized for exceptional legal skill and achievement across the full spectrum of responsibility, exemplary leadership as evidenced by the highest professional and ethical standards, and for contributions to the Los Angeles community at large.

*Methodology: The professionals featured in these pages did not pay to be included. Their profiles were drawn from nomination materials submitted to the Los Angeles Business Journal. Those selected for inclusion were reviewed by the editorial department. The professionals were chosen based on a demonstration of impact made on the profession and on the Los Angeles community.*

## WOMEN OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS

**AISHA SHELTON ADAM**

Founder; Managing Partner  
Adam Investigations Counsel

**A**isha Shelton Adam is a key figure shaping the field of neutral workplace and Title IX investigations. The founder and managing partner of LA County-based Adam Investigations Counsel, Adam leverages her 15-plus years of labor, employment, and business litigation experience to deftly handle complex, and often sensitive, investigations into misconduct allegations. Her ability to navigate investigations with the upmost discretion, thoroughness and fairness has solidified her position an essential resource for public and private entities seeking to resolve conflicts, mitigate risks, and foster safe, inclusive environments.

Adam doesn't gatekeep her knowledge and experience. Rather, she willingly shares her expertise across the Los Angeles and Southern California business, legal, investigations, and human resources spaces.

**MARIBETH ANNAGUEY**

Managing Partner  
Annaguey McCann LLP

**F**rom decades of experience at major California firms to becoming named partner at bi-coastal mid-size litigation firm and eventually founding her own majority female- and minority-owned firm, Maribeth Annaguey practices in complex business, real estate and entertainment litigation.

Annaguey has fought for and protected clients as wide-ranging as real estate companies, hip hop artists, actors, writers, shareholders in business divorces and entertainment industry professionals. A majority of her clients are female executives and female entrepreneurs. Whether prosecuting breach of contract claims, resolving high-stakes partnership disputes, or handling employment claims, Annaguey uses her 20 plus years of litigation experience across various venues to customize strategies that resolve each client's unique matter and concerns.

**KERI CURTIS AXEL**

Partner; Co-Leader, White-Collar Criminal  
& Regulatory Defense Practice Group  
Waymaker LLP

**O**ne of California's leading white-collar lawyers, Keri Curtis Axel defends clients in criminal and regulatory investigations and handles high-stakes civil and criminal litigation in courts and in arbitration. A former federal prosecutor and an enforcement attorney with the Securities & Exchange Commission, she is a first-chair trial lawyer and an experienced appellate attorney who has argued in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals nine times.

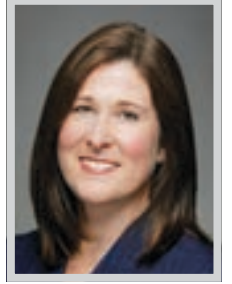
Axel defends Yasiel Puig, the former Dodgers star, who has been accused of false statements to federal investigators, and Roman Storm, a software developer who developed the crypto platform "Tornado Cash," against a cutting-edge prosecution in which the US Attorney in the Southern District of New York is attempting to apply criminal laws to software development.

**JESSICA BAGDANOV**

Partner  
BG Law

**B**G Law partner Jessica Bagdanov has gained widespread prominence for her expertise in handling massive fraud litigation cases involving Chapter 7 bankruptcy filings. She maintains a commitment to bettering the restructuring community, and is an active participant in pro bono and social justice initiatives.

One ongoing case of Bagdanov's involves a fraudulent criminal enterprise and the overnight shutdown of a company that filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy. The debtor in the case is a telecom factoring company that filed for Chapter 7 after losing over \$200 million of investor money in what appears to have been a factoring fraud scheme. Bagdanov and her team have successfully recovered \$3 million from one set of defendants via settlement, and have settled with the government of the Netherlands for approximately \$10 million.

**CHANDRA BEATON**

Partner; Litigation Department Chair  
LightGabler LLP

**C**handra A. Beaton is one of the top employment litigation attorneys in Southern California. She was named a partner at LightGabler LLP in January 2024 and is a member of the firm's executive committee. As the chair of the Litigation Department, she oversees 15 litigation attorneys and seven paralegals, and their cases on behalf of employers and managers in all types of employment-related disputes. Under her guidance, the firm has successfully represented thousands of businesses throughout California in employment matters in court, arbitration proceedings and before government agencies.

Beaton has extensive civil litigation experience in both state and federal courts as well as in arbitration. An experienced and well-rounded labor and employment litigator, Beaton has successfully defended businesses of all sizes.

**THERESA BECERRA**

Partner  
Spencer Fane LLP

**T**heresa Becerra continues to cultivate a well-earned reputation for success in business, real estate, and construction counseling and litigation for clients during a legal career spanning more than two decades. She focuses her private practice in conventional and affordable housing counseling, administrative actions, and litigation, as well as in commercial construction and other complex business litigation, including consumer class action defense, issues arising from claims of unfair competition, unfair business practices, interference with contract and other business torts, and breach of fiduciary duty.

Becerra has extensive experience in both state and federal courts throughout the western US. She has dealt with all aspects of litigation from inception through appeal, using legal strategies focused on achieving favorable outcomes.

**KOREN (KORI) BELL**

Partner  
Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP

**K**oren (Kori) Bell is a partner in Willkie's Litigation Department. She focuses on high-stakes trials, white collar defense, and investigations. A nationally recognized litigator and former Federal Defender, Kori has a record of success representing clients in high-stakes, widely publicized trials and appeals across the country — including in a case she argued before the US Supreme Court.

A Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers, Bell has been lead counsel in some of the nation's most complex courtroom matters. She has been recognized as a top litigator by numerous publications, and praised by clients, Judges, and peers for her courtroom skill. Inside and outside the courtroom, she has handled high-stakes and sensitive matters for companies and prominent individuals across a range of industries.

**KARLA BERENTSEN**

Partner, Chair of Trusts  
& Estates Department  
Hahn & Hahn LLP

**K**arla Berentsen is the chair of Hahn & Hahn's Trust and Estates practice group and handles complex estate planning and trust and estates administration and is a member of the firm's Executive Committee.

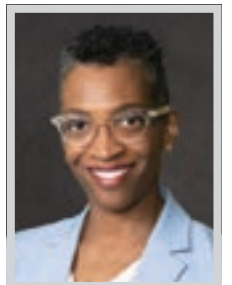
Berentsen's most successful career accomplishments have come from the connection she has with her clients and the peace of mind that she provides. She takes a great deal of pride in her ability to make estate planning concepts palatable and relatively painless. Berentsen cares for her clients and loves helping them get their estate plans off of their "to do" lists so they can get back to enjoying their lives. She mentors young lawyers at Hahn & Hahn, who frequently look to her for guidance and support.

**DEBBIE  
BIRNDORF-ZEILER**

Partner  
Norton Rose Fulbright US LLP

**A**fter over 20 successful years as founder and managing partner of Birndorf Law Offices, an employment counselling and litigation boutique representing California employers and executive, Debbie Birndorf-Zeiler transformed her career path to join Norton Rose Fulbright's Los Angeles office, bringing her over 30 years of experience to help build a talented team at the firm.

Birndorf-Zeiler currently represents employers in all aspects of employment law, including defense of harassment and discrimination claims, wage claims, wage and hour class actions, Labor Code Private Attorneys General Act (PAGA) claims, disability claims and misappropriation of trade secrets. She also drafts and reviews employment contracts, severance agreements, employee handbooks and personnel policies.

**DAPHNE PIERRE BISHOP**

Managing Partner, Los Angeles  
Van Dermyden Makus  
Law Corporation

**D**aphne Pierre Bishop, the LA-based partner at Van Dermyden Makus Law Corporation, is a trailblazer in the niche area of employment law, neutral investigations, where she helps leaders and employees make the well-informed decisions that promote fair and safe workplaces.

Bishop is a widely respected investigations leader not only for her skill and professionalism but also for her generosity in demystifying the critical, rapidly evolving facet of employment law. She acts as a guide, actively working to elevate the entire investigations practice arena by fostering open dialogue, mentoring others and driving industry-wide improvement. The impartial investigations she conducts look into allegations of misconduct, discrimination and harassment, inquiries that require deep legal knowledge.

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# HUESTON HENNIGAN LLP

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**Congratulations**



**ALLISON LIBEU**

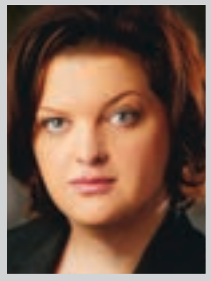
**ALISON L. PLESSMAN**

**Women of Influence: Attorneys**

*—Los Angeles Business Journal*

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## WOMEN OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS

**MARINA BOGORAD**

Partner  
Munck Wilson Mandala

Marina Bogorad was named among Billboard's Top Music Lawyers of 2023 for her work on the copyright infringement litigation against Taylor Swift. The litigation achieved widespread coverage because Bogorad scored several victories for her clients, including a reversal of the dismissal by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and a denial of summary judgment. The case focused on the chorus of Taylor Swift's smash hit Shake It Off and involved groundbreaking issues of copyrightability concerning short phrases, including Bogorad's clients' lyrics "Players gonna play, haters gonna hate."

The Taylor Swift litigation has been just one of the several appellate victories Bogorad achieved on behalf of her client. She achieves consistent results and stands out by thinking outside the proverbial box.

**EVE BRACKMANN**

Senior Partner  
Munck Wilson Mandala

Eve Brackmann has built a distinguished 21-year legal career, establishing herself as a highly respected figure in Southern California's legal community. Throughout her career, she has worked with renowned law firms, achieving notable success in litigation and business disputes, as well as on appeals.

Since joining MWM in 2023, Brackmann has demonstrated herself as a leader, innovative thinker, and has consistently been in pursuit of excellence while growing the firm's real estate litigation practice. She has brought significant clients and active litigation matters to the firm, demonstrating her ability to drive business while providing exceptional legal counsel. Brackmann has built a team of talented junior partners and associates. She has significantly strengthened the firm's litigation bench and expanded its reach into new markets.

**KIMBERLY BRANSCOME**

Litigation Partner; Co-Chair, Product Liability & Mass Torts Practice Group  
Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP

Co-chair of Paul, Weiss's Product Liability & Mass Torts practice group, Kim Branscome is a nationally renowned trial lawyer and litigation strategist focusing on complex litigation and trials involving product liability, professional liability, environmental and toxic torts, and securities matters. She is one of few lawyers nationwide regularly entrusted to both architect overall defense strategy in sprawling, incredibly complex mass tort litigations and lead the defense in the highest-stakes bellwether trials.

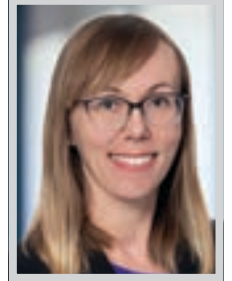
Branscome has secured several high-profile product liability trial victories on behalf of leading multinational corporations across a broad range of sectors, including the pharmaceutical, consumer products, energy and automotive industries.

**CINDY BRITTAIN**

Partner  
Holland & Knight

Cindy Brittain has built a career on mastering the intricacies of international wealth management, where few can match her ability to untangle the most complex tax and estate planning issues across borders. Operating at the intersection of domestic and international law, Brittain addresses the unique challenges facing clients with global interests. Whether advising on pre-immigration planning, optimizing estate strategies for multinational families or navigating cross-border tax regulations, her tailored, results-driven approach has made her a trusted adviser to clients worldwide.

In February, Brittain was a featured speaker at the Society of Trust and Estate Practitioners Global Congress in Rome. She participated in a panel discussion on family financial planning.

**SARAH BROOKS**

Partner  
Venable LLP

Sarah Brooks is a partner in Venable's Intellectual Property Litigation Practice and focuses her practice on intellectual property disputes, including patent and trademark disputes in US District Court and before the USPTO. Brooks counsels a broad range of large and small technology companies, including consumer product, wireless technology, mechanical device, computer science, biotech, medical device, toy, and sporting goods companies, on brand protection, trademark, and patent rights.

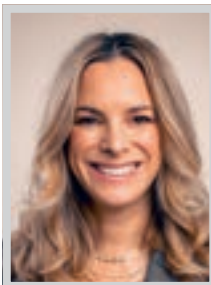
Brooks recently served as lead counsel for ZONE and PPM in a high-stakes trademark litigation. On December 20, 2024, the court granted a preliminary injunction, affirming the likelihood of success on the merits for Brooks' clients and protecting their valuable intellectual property rights.

**PATRICIA BRUM**

Partner  
Snell & Wilmer

Patricia Brum is a partner in the Los Angeles office of Snell & Wilmer, a full-service business law firm with more than 500 attorneys practicing in 17 locations throughout the United States and in Mexico.

Brum, a Brazilian native fluent in Portuguese and Spanish, is a business litigator with extensive experience helping companies resolve high-stakes contract and consumer disputes. She is also part of a select group of attorneys who advises some of the largest financial institutions in the country on consumer class actions. A large part of Brum's practice is focused on defending companies against consumer claims asserted under the Telephone Consumer Protection Act, California Invasion of Privacy Act, California Consumer Privacy Act, Video Privacy Protection Act, and Fair Debt Collection Practices Act.

**LISA CALLIF**

Founding Partner  
Donaldson Callif Perez LLP

Lisa Callif, founding partner of Donaldson Callif Perez, has been the go-to lawyer for independent production companies for close to a decade, specializing in all aspects of business and legal affairs for non-fiction and scripted production companies. Additionally, Callif has spent the last year working on an increased number of scripted projects rendering financing, production, distribution and clearance services. In the clearance space, Callif vets scripts to ensure that projects based on true stories don't violate or infringe upon the personal rights of anyone depicted in the projects.

Callif also provides advice on when producers need to acquire rights and when they don't. Some notable scripted projects include advising acclaimed filmmaker Richard Linklater (for his comedy action film "Hit Man" and his upcoming film Blue Moon."

**JENNIFER CHANG**

Attorney  
Law Office of Jennifer S. Chang

Jennifer Chang is a passionate and experienced special education rights attorney who fiercely advocates for students with special needs and their families. With decades of expertise in special education law, Chang has achieved exceptional results for California families who have nowhere else to turn. Client feedback and reviews attest to the relief and empowerment she brings to families navigating complex special education systems.

Chang's work protects students with disabilities and ensures they receive the curriculum and services required from public schools under The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Chang is committed to educating families on self-advocacy and empowering them to hold school systems accountable for providing equal educational opportunities.

**JULIA CHERLOW**

Partner  
Bird, Marella, Rhow, Lincenberg, Drooks & Nessim, LLP

Former ballerina turned litigation powerhouse, Julia Cherlow is a force in plaintiff-side entertainment litigation. She represents A-list talent and entertainment companies in high-stakes, high-profit disputes, including multiple active arbitrations involving complex compensation and profit participation claims. Her clients span the entertainment spectrum — from Oscar-winning producers to chart-topping performers — and she routinely litigates bet-the-company civil matters across industries, securing victories for television creators, multinational apparel brands, entrepreneurs, and world-renowned architects.

Cherlow is not only a litigator but also a thought leader. She's published widely, including six articles over the past decade, with pieces appearing in the UCLA Entertainment Law Review.

**ESTHER CHO**

Partner-in-Charge, Southern California  
Stradley Ronon Stevens & Young, LLP

Esther Cho serves on Stradley Ronon's board of directors and is the partner-in-charge of the firm's Southern California office. As co-chair of the securities litigation and enforcement practice, she brings over 20 years of experience in securities and regulatory law. Recognized as a leader in her field, she is dedicated to achieving successful outcomes for her clients in high-stakes financial and employment disputes.

As a seasoned litigator, Cho has successfully represented prominent financial services institutions in hundreds of cases in both state and federal courts, as well as before securities arbitration forums such as Financial Industry Regulatory Authority, New York Stock Exchange, JAMS and American Arbitration Association. Cho is skilled in mortgage banking matters, adeptly handling complex issues.

# Mahru Madjidi & Rosie Zilifyan

*Los Angeles Business Journal  
Most Influential Women Attorneys*



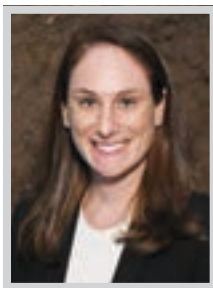
*Congratulations to all the women recognized!*

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## WOMEN OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS

**JENNIFER COHEN**

Partner  
Sklar Kirsh LLP

Jennifer Cohen is a corporate partner at Sklar Kirsh. Her experience as in-house corporate counsel, and finance background, brings practical business-world experience and strong insights into the needs and challenges clients face. This includes advising on M&A, equity investments, capital markets, commercial transactions, and corporate governance matters. She advises clients in a wide range of industries, including consumer products, media and entertainment, and sports.

Prior to joining the firm, Cohen was corporate counsel to two sports and entertainment firms — Elevate Sports Ventures and VenueNext, an associate at Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP, and an investment analyst at Citibank. Cohen's recent representative transactions include her recent work representing Hypothesis Group, LLC, in its acquisition by Elixirr.

**HEATHER CONNIFF**

Partner; Co-Founder  
Shegerian Conniff LLP

Heather Conniff is a founding member of Shegerian Conniff LLP. Her practice focuses on employment law and includes all aspects of case management from initiation through trial, with particular emphasis in law and motion, litigation, and appeals. Conniff has extensive experience and success in drafting and arguing substantive motions.

Conniff also has successfully briefed and argued appeals in both the California Court of Appeal and the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. Conniff places special emphasis on the personal investment of vindicating her client's rights to achieve the best possible resolution and outcome for their cases. Conniff worked for the United States Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, Staff Attorneys Office, as well as the Department of Justice, Office of the United States Trustees during her law school tenure.

**KATY CONROY**

Partner  
Sklar Kirsh LLP

Katy Conroy is a partner of Sklar Kirsh LLP in the Corporate and Real Estate Departments. A former 'big law' M&A attorney, she brings a wealth of experience in complex corporate and real estate transactions. Conroy has deep expertise in sophisticated legal areas such as real estate capital markets, corporate M&A, and fund formation. Clients consistently seek her involvement in their matters, a testament to her ability to distill complex concepts into understandable, actionable advice.

Conroy has a broad corporate practice, advising clients across a variety of industries in various corporate and transactional matters, including mergers and acquisitions, and equity and debt financing transactions. She counsels clients through all phases of the transaction process, including structuring, negotiation, implementation, and ongoing post-transaction advice.

**ERIKA CONTRERAS**

Partner  
Panish | Shea | Ravipudi LLP

Erika Contreras is a partner at Panish | Shea | Ravipudi LLP and focuses her practice on catastrophic personal injury, wrongful death, and motor carrier liability cases. Licensed in California and Nevada, Contreras is a true advocate for her clients and has obtained millions of dollars in awards, including many seven-figure and eight-figure verdicts and settlements.

Among her most distinguished accolades, Contreras was a recipient of the 2023 California Lawyers Attorney of the Year Award for her work on *Sepulveda v. Yucaipa-Calimesa Joint Unified School District*. In this case, Contreras worked alongside firm partner Robert Glassman and obtained a \$15,750,000 settlement for the wrongful death of 13-year-old Adilene Carrasco who died as the result of a mismanaged asthma attack at school.

**SANDRA CRAWSHAW-SPARKS**

Partner; Chair, Entertainment, Copyright & Media Practice Group  
Proskauer Rose LLP

A well-known and respected entertainment industry litigator with 37+ years of success, Sandra (Sandy) Crawshaw-Sparks represents the most iconic names in music on recording, publishing, licensing and management contracts, copyright and trademark infringement claims, unfair competition claims, and the rights of privacy and publicity.

While she fiercely fights high-profile battles for her clients and wins on some of the biggest, industry-shaping matters in entertainment, Crawshaw-Sparks also negotiates pre-litigation and pre-trial resolutions of highly sensitive and confidential personal and entertainment-related disputes, protecting her clients and their reputations from unwarranted media scrutiny and creative distraction.

**MARYAM DANISHWAR**

Member  
Clark Hill PLC

Maryam Danishwar is a fierce advocate for her clients in the courtroom, in arbitration and in negotiation. Driven by the desire to achieve total client satisfaction, Danishwar has developed a risk assessment audit that enables her to provide clients with the advice and counsel that helps them achieve their business goals and mitigate the financial and reputational impact of litigation. A self-described "law nerd" who always had her professional sights set on becoming a trial lawyer, she enjoys the process of digging into a new matter, overcoming obstacles and presenting her case before a jury.

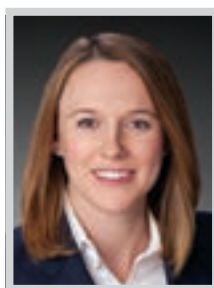
Juries and judges respect Danishwar's capabilities and clients appreciate her guidance. Oftentimes working on behalf of insurance companies, Danishwar balances the financial calculations that determine success for her clients.

**TARA DAVIDOFF**

Partner  
Leech Tishman Nelson Hardiman

Tara Davidoff now focuses her practice on healthcare law, privacy and data security, corporate practice of medicine, professional licensure defense, Medicare reimbursement, and regulatory compliance. She also defends clients in government investigations, bringing full circle her early work as a prosecutor.

Beyond her professional achievements, Davidoff has developed a reputation as a trusted mentor and leader. She has trained new prosecutors in trial techniques and has guided junior university colleagues through the intricacies of complex agreements. Today, as a trusted "mama hen" to junior attorneys at Leech Tishman Nelson Hardiman, she continues to uplift other attorneys, particularly young women who are navigating their blossoming legal careers. Davidoff is resilient, adaptive, deeply intelligent, and unafraid to take the road less traveled.

**FELICIA DAVIS**

Partner; Chair, Los Angeles Employment Law Department  
Paul Hastings LLP

The chair of the Los Angeles Employment Law Department of Paul Hastings and one of a handful of go-to employment lawyers in the country specializing in pay equity litigation, Felicia Davis has served as lead counsel on the largest pay equity cases in the country, representing several high-profile clients in class and/or group pay discrimination litigation. This is a true "bet-the-company" area of law given the potential financial ramifications of class certification, as well as the potential for reputational harm and employee-relations issues, and as a result, marquee clients from all industries (with an emphasis on media, entertainment, and technology companies) turn to Davis to handle these high-profile matters.

Davis also advises clients on CSR, ESG and DEI programs, compliance and best practices.

**PATRICIA DAZA-LUU**

Partner  
Nicolaides Fink Thorpe Michaelides Sullivan LLP

Patricia Daza-Luu's most significant professional achievement to date is her leadership in expanding and shaping the Los Angeles office of Nicolaides Fink Thorpe Michaelides Sullivan LLP into a thriving hub for high-level insurance coverage work. Since joining the firm in 2017 and being named partner in 2021, Daza-Luu has co-lead the office's growth.

Daza-Luu is widely respected for her depth of knowledge in insurance coverage law. Her practice spans evaluation of coverage and risks involving high-stakes matters under both primary and excess liability policies, including claims involving general liability, construction defects, cyber liability, environmental liability, intellectual property exposures, and professional liability, as well as first party property damage and uninsured motorist claims.

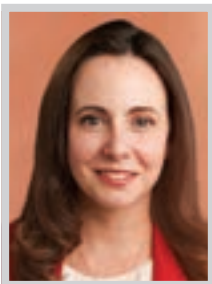
**RITA DIAZ**

Partner; Chair, Litigation Department  
Hahn & Hahn LLP

Rita Diaz is the chair of the Litigation department at Hahn & Hahn and focuses her practice on estate planning and advising trustees and beneficiaries through trust and probate administrations. She represents clients in various trusts and estate litigation matters, including breach of fiduciary disputes and trust contests. Diaz takes a comprehensive and result-driven approach to disputes. Her experience in estate planning, administration and litigation gives her a global perspective critical to avoiding, abating and resolving disputes.

Diaz also counsels employers on a variety of matters, including discrimination, leaves of absence, policies, and wage and hour issues. Diaz is on several planning committees of industry-focused events such as the annual USC Gould School of Law Trusts and Estates Conference and USC Gould School of Law Tax Institute.

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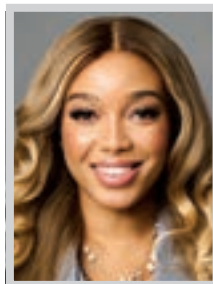


**KATHRYN EDGERTON**

Member  
Mintz

Mintz member Kathryn Edgerton is a highly sought-after trusted advisor renowned for her strategic, business-centric guidance to health care providers and the businesses that serve them. Her clients include behavioral health care providers, fertility clinics, hospitals, laboratories, physician organizations, telehealth providers, home health agencies, medical spas, management services organizations and a variety of other health-related organizations.

Edgerton is a nationally recognized expert in the regulation of addiction treatment facilities, having successfully counseled hundreds of addiction treatment providers through the complexities of daily health care operations. In addition, Edgerton has extensive experience successfully guiding behavioral health care providers through state and federal investigations.



**SIERRA ELIZABETH**

Partner  
Kirkland & Ellis LLP

Sierra Elizabeth is a nationally recognized trial lawyer in Kirkland's Los Angeles office. An innovative and formidable litigator, Elizabeth has extensive jury trial experience in high-stakes lawsuits involving product liability and mass torts, intellectual property and other commercial disputes. Since 2020, Elizabeth has tried and won five bet-the-company jury trials, serving as lead counsel in some of the country's most notable civil litigations. With billions of dollars in exposure, these wins include both plaintiff-side and defense verdicts and settlements. Her roster of clients includes 3M, BP, Abbott Laboratories, AbbVie, Constellation Brands, General Motors LLC, Eli Lilly, Live Person, Inc., among others.

She has been repeatedly recognized as a leading trial attorney by numerous legal and business publications.



**THEANE EVANGELIS**

Co-Chair, Global Litigation Practice  
Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP

Theane Evangelis has spent more than 20 years honing a practice that has positioned her as one of the country's leading litigators. She serves as co-chair of Gibson Dunn's global Litigation Practice Group and previously served as co-chair of the firm's Class Action Practice Group.

Among her recent accomplishments has been his work achieving a groundbreaking victory at the Supreme Court of the United States on behalf of Grants Pass, Oregon, in a landmark case addressing whether the Eighth Amendment bars local governments from enforcing public-camping regulations. In a 6-3 decision handed down on June 28, the Supreme Court held that the constitutional prohibition on "cruel and unusual punishments" does not forbid regulation of camping on public property.



**ANITA FAMILI**

Leader, Real Estate Transactions and Finance Practice; Co-Leader, Cannabis and CBD Practice  
Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, LLP

With more than two decades of experience under her belt, Anita Famili leads Manatt, Phelps & Phillips' Real Estate Transactions and Finance group and is a highly respected attorney in the real estate sector for her extensive experience representing a range of real estate clients, including owners, operators, lenders, developers and investors.

Also co-leading the firm's Cannabis and CBD practice for over a decade, one of the most unique aspects of Famili's practice is her work at the intersection of the real estate finance and cannabis spaces as a trusted partner for clients across the gamut of industries as they acquire, finance and develop major real estate transactions that often venture into the rapidly evolving and thriving cannabis industry.



**MARTA FERNANDEZ**

Chair, Labor & Employment Department  
Jeffer Mangels Butler & Mitchell

Marta M. Fernandez has a traditional labor law practice with over 38 years of experience in the representation of employers in management-labor relations, including collective bargaining in both the private and public sectors. She has negotiated well over 100 labor contracts for her clients with every major labor union in Los Angeles and in California, across all industries and with a focus in healthcare, hospitality and higher education. The labor contracts she negotiates represent multiple millions of dollars to employers in labor costs covering wages, benefits such as health care and pension plans, and work rules.

Fernandez is the chair of the Labor & Employment Law Department at Jeffer Mangels Butler & Mitchell LLP and is a member of the firm's Management Committee.

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## WOMEN OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS

**RACHEL FISET***Managing Partner*

Zweiback, Fiset &amp; Zalduendo LLP

Rachel L. Fiset is a co-founder and partner of Zweiback, Fiset & Zalduendo LLP and has been involved in several of the highest profile investigations and cases in the Central District of California.

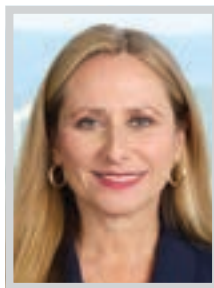
Over the past year, Fiset has broadened her practice and had an impressive streak of wins that demonstrate her skilled approach to representing both plaintiffs and defendants involved in complex litigation and defending government investigations by the SEC, US Attorney, and District Attorney's Office stemming from violations ranging from securities fraud, False Claims Act violations, healthcare fraud, wire fraud and public corruption, among other issues. Fiset also has an impressive track record working with whistleblowers and qui tam relators in cases brought by the SEC and US Attorney's office.

**ELLYN GAROFALO***Partner*

Liner Freedman Taitelman + Cooley

Elynn S. Garofalo is a highly accomplished, veteran trial attorney with an illustrious career, known for her zealous advocacy and successful representation of clients in complex, high-profile matters. This past year, she joined the esteemed entertainment and business litigation firm of Liner, Freedman, Taitelman + Cooley LLP to help lead substantive and complex business litigation matters.

Garofalo has a history of big wins. Most recently, a jury awarded her a defense verdict in the case of Arana v. VSolvit. There, Arana brought defamations claims, alleging that VSolvit, a defense contractor, falsely accused him of accessing trade secrets and proprietary information and, as a result, he lost his security clearance. Garofalo's zealous advocacy resulted in a win for her client.

**JULIE GERCHIK***Partner; Co-Chair, Litigation Department*

Glaser Weil

Julie R. F. Gerchik is a highly sought-after complex commercial litigation partner and co-chair of Glaser Weil's Litigation Department. Gerchik represents an enviable roster of domestic and international clients, including investment firms, entertainment and media companies, and financial services entities, as well as high-net-worth individuals. She also handles all aspects of investigations.

Gerchik brings the exacting skill required to both effectively navigate high-profile public disputes with significant PR implications and handle highly confidential personal matters. Some of her greatest client accomplishments are those that successfully avoided headlines. An example of her work includes her representation of Simon Wiesenthal Center and Rabbi Abraham Cooper in successfully defending a \$4.8 billion defamation lawsuit.

**MARY TESH GLARUM***Partner; Chair, Employment Law Practice*

Doll Amir &amp; Eley LLP

Mary Tesh Glarum is a partner with Doll Amir & Eley and practices general business litigation. Her particular focus is on both employment and health care law. Glarum is chairperson of the firm's employment law practice. She has extensive expertise in labor and employment matters. Her practice includes individual discrimination and wrongful termination claims, both in court and in administrative proceedings.

Glarum has conducted successful trials in both the California federal and state courts, and she has argued appellate matters for her clients before the California Court of Appeal. She also regularly advises businesses and non-profit organizations on traditional "nuts and bolts" human resources issues, including contracts, severance agreements, employee discipline and terminations.

**LISA GLASSER***Partner*

Irell &amp; Manella LLP

When it comes to intellectual property litigation, few attorneys command the courtroom with the precision, strategic prowess and sheer effectiveness of Irell & Manella partner Lisa Glasser. Over the past two years, she has reinforced her reputation as one of the nation's most formidable litigators, securing more than 10 trial victories across multiple complex litigation matters.

In March 2025, as co-lead counsel, Glasser secured a trial victory for memory module company Netlist in a suit against Samsung, which involves patents relating to computer memory technology. The jury returned its verdict in less than two hours agreeing with Netlist that Samsung breached an agreement to supply crucial NAND and DRAM memory products in exchange for a license to Netlist memory patents.

**LEAH GODESKY***Partner*

O'Melveny &amp; Myers LLP

O'Melveny partner Leah Godesky is a first-chair trial lawyer who leads winning teams, taking on multibillion-dollar cases for clients across an array of industries, including entertainment, insurance, healthcare, airlines, and banking. From industry-shaking #MeToo litigation to consequential courtroom battles, Godesky's work for her clients frequently makes front-page headlines.

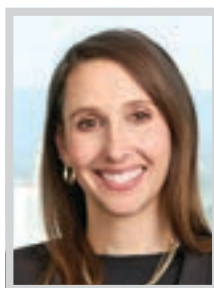
Godesky is defending Planned Parenthood Federation of America against a \$1.8 billion False Claims Act lawsuit in Texas. As lead counsel, she is representing Planned Parenthood against claims that it encouraged five Planned Parenthood affiliates to submit fraudulent claims to federal and state Medicare programs. The appellate court unanimously ruled for Planned Parenthood in February 2025.

**JAMIE GONZALEZ***Partner*

Lagerlof, LLP

Jamie Gonzalez is a partner at Lagerlof, LLP focusing on litigation concerning probate estates, trusts, guardianships, and conservatorships. She is a highly skilled and dedicated trust and estates litigator who has consistently demonstrated an exceptional commitment to advocacy, professionalism, and achieving outstanding results for her clients.

Gonzalez has extensive experience in trust and estate litigation and has successfully navigated complex legal disputes, always prioritizing the best interests of her clients. Whether representing beneficiaries, trustees, or fiduciaries, Gonzalez approaches each case with integrity. Beyond her legal expertise, Gonzalez is a compassionate advocate who understands the emotional and financial stakes involved in trust and estate disputes.

**GALI GRANT***Partner*

Glaser Weil

Gali Grant is an experienced trial attorney and partner in Glaser Weil's Litigation Department. Grant maintains a diverse practice that includes both national and international cases involving high-stakes corporate and financial disputes. She represents a range of clients, including large and small businesses, film production companies, studios, financial institutions, investment funds, high-net-worth individuals, corporate directors, hotels and municipalities.

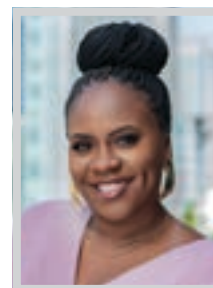
Grant's recent success includes her representation of a holding company in litigation concerning an alleged breach of a \$38.5 million purchase agreement for a Gulfstream jet. Following a five-day bench trial led by Grant, the Glaser Weil team prevailed, reducing Plaintiff's damages claim of approximately \$20 million to no more than \$50,000.

**SAMANTHA GRANT***Partner*

Reed Smith LLP

Samantha Grant is a go-to labor and employment litigator for national and global companies in administrative, arbitration, and trial proceedings who leverages her analytical skills to deliver superior results in the most difficult matters facing her clients. She also spends significant time dedicated to serving the Bench, Bar, and broader communities and made history when she became the first woman of color to be elected as chair of the American Bar Association Section of Labor and Employment Law.

Because of the insight and experience she gained on her secondment working as in-house employment counsel for a Fortune 50 company, Grant is a pragmatic and strategic outside counsel. She learns the business of her clients and finds targeted solutions to legal problems while considering the business objectives and impact.

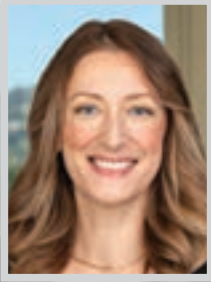
**DEMETRIA L. GRAVES***Founding & Managing Partner; Certified Family Law Specialist*  
The Graves Law Firm

Certified family law specialist, Demetria Graves, opened her own family law practice, The Graves Law Firm, at the age of 25 — just six months out of law school. She has offices in both Pasadena and Beverly Hills.

Graves is the immediate past chair of the Family Law Executive Committee with the California Lawyers Association. She also currently co-chairs the African American Alumni Association at Loyola Law School and is a mentor to several law students and young attorneys. She served as a past Judge Pro Tem with the Los Angeles Superior Court. She has worked diligently to ensure diversity in the legal profession and work with her colleagues across all organizations to provide informative programs for lawyers of color and women seeking judicial appointments.



## WOMEN OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS

**VANJA HABEKOVIC**

Partner; Chair, Tax Department  
Ervin Cohen & Jessup LLP

Vanja Habekovic is a partner and chair of the Tax Department at Ervin Cohen & Jessup LLC. Habekovic is a corporate attorney with a tax expertise. She specializes in mergers and acquisitions, executive compensation, international tax, and 1031 exchanges. Her extensive knowledge of various areas of law informs her multidisciplinary approach and holistic vision of matters.

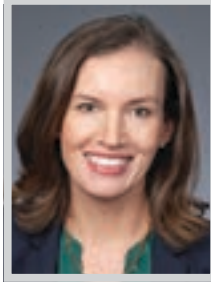
Habekovic has spent the past two decades crafting innovative tax solutions. This is what sets her apart from other corporate attorneys — the depth and breadth of her tax knowledge and extensive experience. Clients often comment that they are impressed with her ability to identify and anticipate critical issues before they arise and her dynamic problem-solving.

**COLLEEN HART**

Partner  
Proskauer Rose LLP

Colleen Hart is the person C-suite executives call to negotiate their contracts. She leads the benefits and compensation aspects for several major clients in diverse sectors and is focused on leading negotiations and advising on executive compensation, employee benefits, and employment arrangements in high-profile corporate transactions and restructuring efforts. She analyzes, structures, and negotiates employment and compensation arrangements for California's top companies, executives, and innovative start-ups, while also advising on the effects of transactions on compensation and benefit plans. Her cutting-edge legal work consistently shapes the industry.

As a US Navy veteran, Hart is also a tireless national leader in veterans' advocacy and a pro bono leader.

**SASCHA HENRY**

Partner; Business Trial  
Practice Group Leader  
Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton

For nearly three decades, Sascha Henry has defended companies against class actions and other sensitive and complex legal challenges. Well-versed in litigation across state and federal trial courts, along with appellate work in the California Court of Appeal and the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, Henry uses practical business judgment to creatively reach optimal results for her clients, who view her as an exceptional litigator, trial lawyer and problem solver.

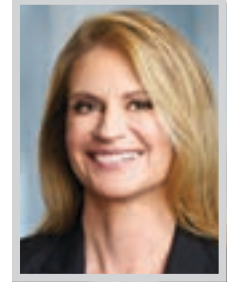
Henry co-leads Sheppard Mullin's Business Trial practice group, which is not only the firm's largest practice group but also one of its fastest growing. In 2024, the litigation-based practice group welcomed an unprecedented number of lateral hires, including eight partners, seven special counsel and 15 associates.

**CHRISTINE HSU**

Partner  
Olivarez Madruga Law  
Organization LLP

Christine Hsu, partner at Olivarez Madruga Law Organization, heads the firm's thriving Education Law practice group and is a passionate advocate for her school district clients. With deep experience in all aspects of general education law, Hsu currently advises 11 school districts across California, including the El Monte Union High School District, the Centinela Valley Union High School District, and the Rosemead School District. Her practice focuses on labor and employment matters including labor relations, collective bargaining, employee discipline, reductions in force, employee compensation and administrative hearings.

Hsu is also experienced in advising law enforcement agencies for school districts and cities.

**TERESA HUGGINS**

Partner  
Waymaker LLP

With an emphasis on intellectual property, fintech, and First Amendment matters, Teresa Huggins handles complex commercial litigation at both the trial and appellate level. A partner at Waymaker LLP, she represents both plaintiffs and defendants, and has argued in state and federal court. She has significant experience advising executives, entrepreneurs, investors and companies to reach swift, successful resolutions.

Last year, Huggins and co-counsel Brian Klein won a significant victory for client Bitfloor, Inc. when partial summary judgment was granted to onetime customers of the failed cryptocurrency exchange but also granted Bitfloor and founder Roman Shtylman's cross-motion, agreeing with them that the damages awarded should be limited to the dollar value of bitcoin more than a decade ago.

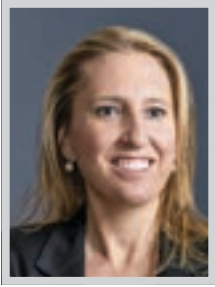
## PANISH SHEA RAVIPUDI LLP

Congratulations to our partner, **ERIKA CONTRERAS** on being named among the Los Angeles Business Journal's 2025 Women of Influence: Attorneys. Her leadership and commitment to serve as an advocate for change, equity, and inclusion inspire us all.

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WOMEN OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS



**STEPHANIE HURST**  
Partner  
Mayer Brown

Stephanie Hurst has played a key role in the expansion of the firm’s M&A practice, client roster as well as increasing the diversity of the Los Angeles office. She has worked on dozens of innovative and complex deals involving multiple jurisdictions and in evolving and emerging areas including tech and Environmental, Social, and Governance.

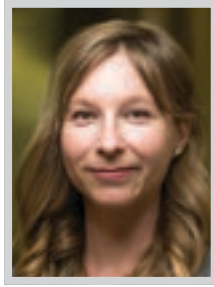
Hurst is also working with VC firms on their investments in diverse and underrepresented businesses as well as family offices identifying potential investment opportunities in start-ups located in key venture capital and growth spaces in California, including Silicon Beach and Silicon Valley. She is passionate about pro bono having logged more than 1,700 hours since she started at the firm in 2011. She also plays a pivotal role in summer associate recruiting.



**NISHA KANCHANAPOOMI**  
Partner  
Kirkland & Ellis LLP

Nisha Kanchanapoomi is a corporate partner in the Los Angeles office of Kirkland & Ellis. Her practice focuses on all aspects of debt financing transactions, including the representation of private equity sponsors, hedge funds, public and private companies and financial institutions in secured and unsecured financings, cash flow and asset-based facilities, leveraged buyouts, recapitalizations, cross-border transactions, workouts and restructurings, and first-lien second-lien, mezzanine, subordinated and unitranche financings. Kanchanapoomi is also part of the group who advise on novel, complex and high-profile liability management exercises.

Kanchanapoomi’s client roster includes Bed Bath and Beyond Inc., Equinox Group, Harbor Freight Tools USA, Inc., and Neiman Marcus Group.



**JAMIE KENDALL**  
Partner  
Doll Amir & Eley LLP

Jamie Kendall is a partner at Doll Amir. Her practice focuses on business litigation and intellectual property matters, servicing a wide range of clients in the consumer product, technology, entertainment, health care, and financial services industries. Ms. Kendall has experience in all stages of litigation, from inception through settlement, arbitration, and trial in California state and federal court. She also counsels clients with regard to developments in the law.

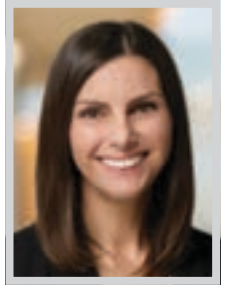
Kendall’s successes include her work co-leading a team that manages Fortune 10 global online retailer’s Proposition 65 portfolio, defending and resolving hundreds of matters. She also successfully defended a “bet-the-company” arbitration related to contract claims between medical group and management company, resulting in award of all claims in client’s favor.



**NARY KIM**  
Partner  
Kendall Brill & Kelly LLP

Kendall Brill & Kelly’s (KBK’s) Nary Kim rose to be a partner in just five years, having demonstrated the expertise needed to develop winning cases for KBK’s clients. She has helped the firm win favorable judgments and arbitration victories for major film studios and other entertainment clients, including the early dismissal of a high-profile lawsuit against Paramount Pictures seeking \$500 million brought by two former actors in the 1968 film adaptation of “Romeo and Juliet” in May 2023. She also played a leading role in securing the early dismissal of a child pornography case filed against Nirvana and its record label by the person pictured on the album cover of Nirvana’s “Nevermind.”

Kim is currently co-lead counsel representing Paramount Global in a high-profile lawsuit filed by Warner Bros. Discovery.



**KIMBERLY KLINSPORT**  
Office Managing Partner; Partner  
Foley & Lardner LLP

Kimberly Klinsport is a partner at Foley & Lardner LLP where she serves as litigation chair for the Los Angeles and San Diego offices and co-chair of the Cybersecurity and Privacy area of focus within Foley’s nationwide Innovative Technology sector. She has now been with the firm for over a decade.

From early on in her career, Klinsport learned the importance of taking initiative while maintaining humility to ask questions and pull from the experts around her. By approaching work this way, she has garnered more trust with her clients, ensuring they know she is listening to them and creating bespoke solutions for their matters. As one of the youngest litigation chairs in Foley’s history, Klinsport has had a number of major victories in arbitration throughout her career.



HEATHER CONNIFF

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**CONGRATULATIONS!**

To the Los Angeles Business Journal Women of Influence!

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## WOMEN OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS

**KATE KRAUS**

Partner  
Covington & Burling LLP

**K**ate Kraus of Covington & Burling LLP is nationally recognized and has more than 20 years of experience in tax planning and structuring. She advises on a wide range of partnership, corporate, and real estate matters, including joint ventures, fund formations, financing transactions, mergers and acquisitions, restructurings, liquidations, debt workouts, bankruptcies, and REIT transactions.

Among her recent successes, Kraus recently advised on the restructuring of a platform joint venture that holds approximately \$2.5 billion of real property, and she is currently restructuring two foreign partnerships, one of which holds over \$8 billion of pharmaceutical assets. She has also advised on the eligibility for and transfers of over \$1 billion in energy tax credits under the Inflation Reduction Act.

**BETHANY KRISTOVICH**

Partner  
Munger, Tolles & Olson LLP

**B**ethany Kristovich is a litigation partner at Munger, Tolles & Olson in Los Angeles, where she has built an impressive career marked by numerous successful accomplishments in bet-the-company litigation. Her expertise in complex civil litigation, particularly in high-stakes trials and appeals, has earned her a reputation as an elite attorney. Kristovich's practice focuses on professional responsibility, consumer protection, product defect and mass tort cases, representing some of the nation's largest companies, law firms and private equity firms in their most sensitive matters.

One of Kristovich's most notable career accomplishments is winning a \$90 million condemnation award for her client Lonestar Airport Holdings, a portfolio company of Oaktree Capital Management, in a breach of contract dispute.

**EMILY KUWAHARA**

Partner; Co-Chair, Appellate Group  
Crowell & Moring LLP

**A**s co-chair of Crowell & Moring's Appellate group, clients turn to Crowell & Moring partner Emily Kuwahara to honestly assess their risks and deliver wins on complex disputes. She has successfully represented clients in appeals, patent inventorship disputes, breach of contract actions, particularly for technology companies, business torts, antitrust and consumer class actions, unfair competition law and other complex business disputes, resulting in satisfied clients and the recovery of hundreds of millions of dollars.

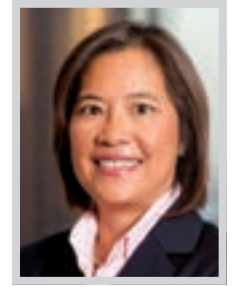
Over the last decade, Kuwahara has been leading a Crowell team representing The Regents of the University of California in a number of key cases. From 2011 to 2020, for example, she litigated a series of disputes relating to the licensing of compounds to treat prostate cancer.

**VERLAN KWAN**

Partner  
Keystone Law Group, P.C.

**V**erlan Y. Kwan, a partner and top probate attorney with Keystone Law Group, P.C., not only serves as a core member of the firm's Executive Committee, overseeing business strategy and direction, but she also supervises the Probate Administration Department, managing and mentoring less experienced attorneys, paralegals and staff members.

Kwan, who's been with the firm since its inception and represented numerous high-profile clients, like the holistic practitioner Dr. Sebi's estate and the surviving spouse of David E. Walters, the largest timeshare developer on the island of Kauai in Hawaii, has been instrumental in propelling Keystone to the ranks of one of the largest and most prominent probate firms in California. Kwan has more than 19 years of legal experience and a reputation for being compassionate.

**KRISTINE KWONG**

Senior Partner  
Musick, Peeler & Garrett LLP

**K**ristine Kwong is a partner in Musick, Peeler & Garrett's Los Angeles office and advises and counsels clients on a wide range of business, corporate, operational and employment issues, including business counseling, contract negotiation and preparation, restrictive covenant and non-compete agreements, executive mobility issues, due diligence in connection with mergers and acquisitions, and range of employment matters.

Kwong represents both public and private sector entities in retail, manufacturing, finance, health-care, hospitality, real estate, and charitable and tax-exempt organizations, including religious entities, federally qualified health centers, educational institutions from K-12 districts, colleges to charter schools, and public sector agencies, municipalities, commissions and special districts.

**INFLUENCE, DEFINED.**

**M|R** MICHELMAN & ROBINSON, LLP  
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

We proudly salute **LARA SHORTZ**, who continues to deliver outstanding results for clients across industries while also helping to drive the firm's growth and forge deeper community connections across L.A.

A woman of influence, indeed.

L.A. Office Managing Partner  
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WOMEN OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS



**KELLY SIOBHAN LAFFEY**  
Partner  
Stubbs Alderton & Markiles, LLP

With more than a decade of experience in the legal field, Kelly Laffey's practice focuses on advising emerging growth and middle market companies on issues related to corporate governance and formation, venture capital and other financings, mergers and acquisitions, joint ventures, cross-border transactions, employee compensation, complex stockholder and operating agreements, and other general corporate matters.

As a partner in the transactional group at Stubbs Alderton & Markiles, Laffey's clients are representative of the vibrant startup and middle market ecosystem and include companies in the technology, digital and entertainment, clean energy, healthcare, e-commerce, and manufacturing industries. She also advises investors and funds in connection with venture capital and other financings.



**SUSAN LEADER**  
Partner  
Paul Hastings LLP

Susan Leader joined Paul Hastings in May 2023, adding further depth to the firm's Entertainment & Media litigation practice. Leader not only has experience leading complex litigations but also serving as a first chair in trying those cases in front of a judge, jury, or in arbitration. Since joining the firm, Leader has shown that her litigation capabilities also extend well beyond the entertainment industry, as she has led several successful litigation matters for the firm's clients in the tech and energy sectors, among others.

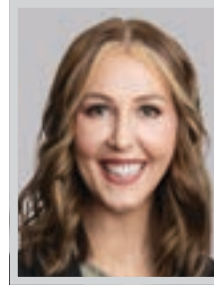
Over the last year, Leader has solidified herself as a go-to litigator and a premier trial lawyer from coast-to-coast. Her successes of late come on behalf of both plaintiffs and defendants, and include her recent back-to-back defense verdict wins for RWE Renewables.



**IRENE LEE**  
Partner  
Russ August & Kabat

Irene Lee is a partner at Russ August & Kabat, where she focuses her practice on all aspects of intellectual property, including patent, trademark, copyright protection through registration, enforcement, and licensing. Lee has extensive experience in trademark and copyright prosecution and litigation with an emphasis on global brand expansion and content management. Lee also counsels clients concerning patent litigation and monetization.

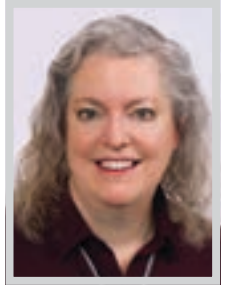
Recently, Lee has managed over 5,000 brands and attendant rights as part of her role in managing IP portfolio for clients such as The Honest Company, Inc., Thor Industries, Airstream, The Carroll Hall Shelby Trust, The estate of Jim Brown, The Only Agency, Scantron Corporation, and many more.



**ALEXANDRA LETZEL**  
Partner  
Loeb & Loeb LLP

Alexandra Letzel has emerged as a standout leader in the niche field of high-net-worth trust and estate litigation, garnering recognition not only for her legal expertise, but also for her compassion and deep commitment to resolving some of the most complex and sensitive matters for prominent individuals.

Letzel's practice has a unique focus on guardianship and conservatorship disputes, particularly in cases involving celebrities and high-net-worth individuals. She works closely with Gabrielle Vidal, chair of Loeb's Guardianships practice and co-chair of the Trust & Estate Litigation practice, to navigate this intricate and often high-stakes area of law, where the interplay of legal, financial, and deeply personal issues can be particularly challenging.



**MEG LODISE**  
Partner  
Sacks, Glazier, Franklin & Lodise LLP

In her 37-year career, Meg Lodise has established an impressive reputation for successfully handling some of the most complex and high-dollar trusts and estates disputes in California. Her work not only achieves important resolutions for clients, but also shapes the future of trusts and estates law.

Lodise obtained a precedent-setting decision in *O'Connor v. O'Connor* (26 Cal.App.5th 871), defending an appeal brought to challenge the exercise of a power of appointment. The Court of Appeal affirmed the Probate Court's orders, and in doing so, clarified California law on powers of appointment. Also, as a longtime fellow and current president-elect of the American College of Trust and Estate Counsel, Lodise works to improve laws, procedures and professional responsibility in connection with trusts and estates law.

LOS ANGELES BUSINESS JOURNAL'S  
2025 WOMEN OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS

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VANJA HABEKOVIC  
PARTNER

CATHERINE A. VEENEMAN  
PARTNER



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## WOMEN OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS

**AMY JANE LONGO**

Partner  
Ropes & Gray LLP

Known as one of LA's star litigators, Amy Jane Longo has more than 25 years of experience in securities litigation, with significant first-chair experience both as a defense counsel and as a senior SEC trial attorney.

Longo served as the head of the SEC's Los Angeles Regional Office trial unit for nearly five years, building a formidable reputation throughout the Southwest region. As a founding partner in Ropes & Gray's Los Angeles office since 2022, Longo leads litigation and enforcement matters that span commercial and securities litigation, SEC and DOJ enforcement — particularly involving asset managers and public issues, and hot-button cryptocurrency issues, including for some of California's most prominent investment funds, public and private companies.

**DANA LOWY**

Founding Partner  
Meyer, Olson, Lowy & Meyers LLP

Dana Lowy is a founding partner at Meyer, Olson, Lowy & Meyers, LLP, a family law firm located in Century City and Irvine, California. Founded in 2000 entirely by female partners, with the goal of representing clients in high conflict and complex divorces and custody cases, the firm now includes approximately 25 attorneys, who have expertise in all aspects of family law and are adept at both mediating and litigating cases for men and women.

As a founding partner, Lowy brings three decades of experience to divorce cases. During this time, her clients in Los Angeles and Orange County, have relied on her to handle high-asset divorce and custody cases on their behalf. She protects her California clients' assets and prioritizes the well-being of the children involved.

**MAHRU MADJIDI**

Shareholder  
Shegerian & Associates

Mahru Madjidi is known as a top trial lawyer and shareholder at Shegerian & Associates. In 2024 alone, her team of attorneys recovered more than \$30 million for employees who were wronged in the workplace, totaling in the past three years over \$120 million recovered on her team of associates.

One example of her recent success was her work on *Incalza v. Porsche*. Incalza had worked at Porsche for nearly a decade, but Porsche terminated Incalza shortly before his 60th birthday. The jury found Porsche guilty of fraud for telling him he would be rehired yet having him sign a severance agreement that stated otherwise. Madjidi was lead on the trial team for this case and successfully recovered \$3.6 million for Incalza.

**LEEANNE MANCARI**

Partner  
Covington & Burling LLP

Leeanne Mancari is a standout leader in the eDiscovery field. She is a true eDiscovery litigator, a category not many eDiscovery attorneys belong to. Not only that, eDiscovery is a technology-driven industry and Mancari brings a wealth of knowledge on AI and cutting-edge eDiscovery technologies to her clients. She built a practice group focused on eDiscovery and is bringing her experience to expand the group at Covington.

As an eDiscovery attorney, Mancari counsels clients (and colleagues) in a drastically complicated and ever-changing area of the law, dealing with identification, preservation, collection, review, and production of potential evidence in a matter. Mancari is relied upon by clients to represent their interests when disputes arise regarding data in litigations and investigations.

**CAROLINE MANKEY**

Partner, Intellectual Property;  
Member, Board of Directors  
Akerman LLP

Caroline Mankey, an experienced trial attorney at Akerman LLP, excels in high stakes and high profile intellectual property disputes. Mankey represents clients across multiple industries, including entertainment, arts, fashion, retail, and manufacturing. With nearly 30 years of legal practice, Mankey has successfully served as lead trial counsel in numerous trials and arbitrations, achieved victories in dispositive motions and appeals in both federal and state courts.

Early in her career, Mankey protected The Three Stooges' rights in a case that resulted in the publication of seminal right of publicity jurisprudence by the California Supreme Court. Mankey also prevailed in a high profile jury trial representing Nikki Sixx, founder of rock band Motley Crue.



We proudly congratulate our colleagues, **Emily Kuwahara** and **Sima Namiri-Kalantari**, on being named among the *Los Angeles Business Journal's* 2025 "**Women of Influence: Attorneys.**"

"Fight for the things that you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you"

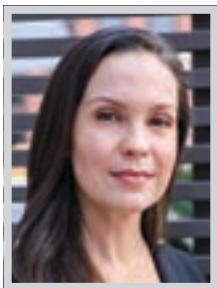
—Ruth Bader Ginsberg

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## WOMEN OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS

**KATHRYN McCANN**

Partner  
Annaguey McCann LLP

After 17 years of working at mid-size bi-coastal firms, Kathryn McCann decided to start the women and minority owned litigation boutique Annaguey McCann LLP with her friend and law partner, Maribeth Annaguey. Along with a third partner, they started the firm with the goal of engaging in a smaller, more client-focused practice. In just 10 months, the firm grew to five attorneys and three full-time staff, all colleagues from previous firms.

McCann's entire legal career has been focused on representing national and global companies in large, complex and class action litigation in the areas of business, real estate, contracts, employment and entertainment. She has a long track record of securing favorable outcomes for her clients in trial, arbitration, mediation and motion practice.

**KIMBERLINA McKinney**

Senior Counsel  
Newell Law Group

Kimberlina N. McKinney is a distinguished entertainment law professional with over a decade of experience in the industry. Her practice spans international and domestic media ventures, union/guild productions, acquisitions, licensing, and distribution deals.

McKinney specializes in intellectual property, deal strategy, and negotiations, catering to diverse entertainment realms, including television, film, new media, music, tech-tainment ventures, and live events. While serving as in-house counsel, McKinney collaboratively oversaw global scripted business and legal affairs, including negotiating and drafting agreements across Brazil, Italy, Mexico, South Africa, Canada, USA and more.

**DAMARIS MEDINA**

Shareholder  
Buchalter, APC

Damaris Medina is a shareholder in Buchalter's Los Angeles and Orange County offices. She is co-chair of the firm's Health Care & Life Sciences Practice, a member of the Board of Directors, the firm's chief diversity officer and a member of the firm's Litigation and Health Care Practice Groups.

Medina represents hospital systems and a diverse array of other health care clients in high stakes litigation in federal and state court, as well as in arbitration. Medina has successfully litigated numerous large exposure reimbursement cases against major health plans and recovered millions of dollars on behalf of health care providers. She also advises hospital systems and other health care providers on managed care contracting, revenue cycle strategies, and risk and compliance issues.

**DEBRA ELLWOOD MEPPEN**

Chair, National Employment Law Practice Group; Chair, Women's Initiative; Ventura County Co-Managing Partner; Co-Chair, Leadership Equality and Diversity Program  
Gordon Rees Scully Mansukhani, LLP

Debra Ellwood Meppen is a powerhouse in the legal profession, particularly within Hollywood's elite circles. A trusted advisor to producers, directors, studio executives, talent, and their agents, she is the first call when high-stakes, potentially explosive cases arise — cases that, if mishandled, could derail movie releases, concert tours, or entire careers.

With decades of experience in entertainment law, litigation, and negotiation, Meppen's work is distinguished by her expertise and unwavering discretion. The majority of her most significant successes remain behind the scenes, ensuring that crises are averted before they ever reach the public eye.

**FELICIA R. MEYERS**

Founding Partner  
Meyer, Olson, Lowy & Meyers LLP

Felicia R. Meyers is a partner at Meyer, Olson, Lowy & Meyers, LLP. The law firm attracted a lot of attention when it launched as California's only female-established firm. Since then, the firm's record in court has garnered even more public interest. This has attracted many high-profile clients in the entertainment, business and sports industries. Meyers primarily serves high-profile clients on matters related to high-asset divorce and custody.

Meyers started her career practicing civil litigation, and she has exclusively practiced family law for over 25 years. She is a dynamic and zealous litigator, who is at her best when she is battling it out for her clients in the courtroom. Her extensive litigation experience provides a distinct advantage in representing clients with complex child custody and financial issues.

**LATHAM & WATKINS** LLP**Defining Experience and Commitment**

Congratulations to our partner Ana O'Brien and all of this year's *Women of Influence* honorees.

Ana stands out as both a visionary leader and one of the leading tax and REIT lawyers in the country. She embodies the talent and culture of Latham, providing valuable leadership at our firm and in the local community.

**Ana O'Brien**

Deputy Office Managing Partner,  
Los Angeles and Century City  
Global Co-Chair, Real Estate Investment  
Trusts (REIT) Industry Group

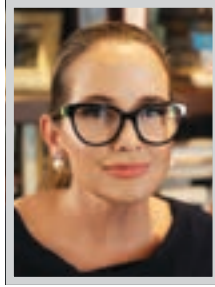
## WOMEN OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS

**JEAN MOONEY**

Counsel  
DTO Law

Jean Mooney is a distinguished litigator with over two decades of experience known for her meticulous jurisprudential analysis and effective, persuasive briefing on complex legal issues. She has earned a reputation for her ability to identify the strengths and weaknesses of her clients' claims and defenses, allowing her to resolve disputes favorably and expeditiously.

Mooney's practice centers on class action defense and complex commercial litigation. She regularly defends corporations in consumer class actions nationwide and has successfully defeated class actions involving allegations under California's Unfair Competition Law, the Consumers Legal Remedies Act, the False Advertising Law, and various state warranty laws. She is well-versed in crafting the most strategic defenses to such actions.

**ANN MARIE MORTIMER**

Managing Partner, Los Angeles;  
Head, Commercial Litigation Practice  
Hunton Andrews Kurth LLP

Ann Marie Mortimer has built a distinguished career as a leader in commercial litigation and environmental law, and her accomplishments reflect her dedication to excellence, advocacy, and mentorship. As the founder and managing partner of Hunton Andrews Kurth's Los Angeles office, she stands out as one of the few female managing partners in California, exemplifying leadership and paving the way for future generations of women in law.

California is the crucible of regulations in technology and the environment—two of the most defining issues of our time, and Mortimer is at the forefront of the legal battles in both of these areas. She has secured multiple wins recently, distinguishing her as an impactful lawyer attaining noteworthy results for name brand clients.

**MICHELE MULROONEY**

Partner; National Co-Chair,  
Private Wealth Group  
Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP

Michele Mulrooney is a partner and chair of Willkie's Private Clients Group in Los Angeles. With over 30 years of experience representing high-net-worth families and individuals, Mulrooney focuses on estate planning for high-net-worth individuals, including actors, directors, writers, producers, artists, sports figures, business owners and executives, and real estate investors. She understands all aspects of sophisticated estate planning.

While Mulrooney is known to provide market-leading, cutting-edge client service, her approach is very traditional — discreet, private and confidential. She served as general counsel to A-list talent and high-net-worth individuals, providing advice regarding investment advisers, employees, and business investments.

**LINDSEY MUNYER**

Partner  
Keystone Law Group, P.C.

As a formidable litigator, partner and founding member of Keystone Law Group's Executive Committee, Lindsey F. Munyer has been a driving force behind Keystone's propulsion to California's largest and most prominent probate litigation firm, representing high-profile clients like the administrator of Hollywood producer Steve Bing's estate, and securing trial rulings with damages that are rarely awarded in cases that often involve complex creditor claims and intricate tax issues.

A recognized thought leader in probate litigation, Munyer is both a certified specialist in Estate Planning, Trust & Probate Law and holds her LLM in taxation, having worked with the IRS Office of Chief Counsel early in her career, and her influence extends beyond the courtroom to speaking, writing, and teaching engagements.

**SIMA NAMIRI-KALANTARI**

Partner  
Crowell & Moring LLP

Sima Namiri-Kalantari, a partner in Crowell's Antitrust and Competition Group, has established herself as a distinguished complex commercial litigator, specializing in antitrust and unfair competition law. Providing strategic representation and guidance to her clients, Namiri-Kalantari has defended clients in civil antitrust litigation, as well as represented Fortune 500 companies as plaintiffs in recovery actions against price-fixing cartels. In particular, Namiri-Kalantari leverages her background in economics to all stages of litigation, including expert selection and testimony, discovery, class action defense, and preparing for trial.

Namiri-Kalantari regularly counsels clients on a broad range of antitrust issues, and also conducts antitrust compliance trainings.

Holland & Knight congratulates our own

**Cindy Brittain**

for her selection by the *Los Angeles Business Journal* to its list of **2025 Women of Influence: Attorneys**.

We applaud all of this year's honorees for their exceptional legal skills, achievements and contributions to the Los Angeles community.

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## WOMEN OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS

**SABRINA NARAIN**

Managing Partner  
LTL Attorneys

Sabrina Narain is a formidable litigator who became the first female partner at her past firm within three short years, and is just getting started. Narain joined LTL Attorneys earlier this year as a managing partner, where she spearheads the firm's consumer protection litigation practice.

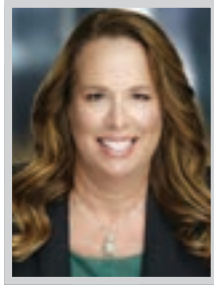
As a leader at her firm, Narain manages her booming team and continues to grow the department. In less than a year, she has dramatically expanded the firm's practice by attracting and nurturing junior attorneys and a robust support staff. She is also adept at leveraging the firm's in-house proprietary technology Legalmaton, an AI software that organizes a company's proprietary information to maximize efficiency and drives smarter legal strategies and savings for her clients.

**KRISTEN NESBIT**

Co-Regional Managing Partner  
Fisher Phillips LLP

A powerhouse lawyer with a record for successfully handling high-stakes matters, Kristen Nesbit is a trusted partner to her clients, including Fortune 500 companies, billion-dollar corporations and public entities. Nesbit has handled numerous single-plaintiff and class action lawsuits, seeing them through to verdict. Her triumphs in the labor and employment arena, combined with her active community involvement, prestigious award recognitions and commitment to championing diversity and equality make Nesbit a legal industry leader.

Committed to helping diverse business owners succeed, Nesbit regularly assists Disability-Owned Business Enterprise, Minority Business Enterprise, Women Business Enterprise, and Veteran Business Enterprise employers.

**STEPHANIE JONES NOJIMA**

Partner  
Sanders Roberts LLP

Stephanie Jones Nojima is a litigator with over 25 years of experience who has regularly been engaged for bet the company litigation in the areas of business and entertainment litigation, data privacy, false advertising, unfair competition, consumer class action defense, and product liability defense. Nojima was promoted to partner at two different firms, Alston & Bird and Sanders Roberts LLP. She has held leadership positions at both firms and has made it a goal to champion and mentor younger diverse attorneys and staff members.

Nojima also serves on the Board for Pawsitive Teams, a non-profit corporation that trains and places service dogs with persons with disabilities and runs goal-directed therapy dog programs.

**PUANANI NORWOOD**

Office Managing Partner  
BCLP

Since joining BCLP in 2013, Puanani Norwood has risen from a 1L Summer Associate in Kansas City to her current role as Office Managing Partner in Los Angeles, a title she received just 5 months after being named into the BCLP partner class, showcasing the firm's trust in her leadership skills and reputation for being a trusted advisor within the energy transition sector. She is a skilled negotiator and deal closer, focusing on commercial real estate transactions in the renewable energy sector, representing regulated public utility companies, tax equity investors, developers, and construction lenders.

Norwood currently oversees a team of BCLP lawyers who act as local counsel in connection with the representation of financial institutions and companies financing various battery, wind and solar projects across the country.

**ANA O'BRIEN**

Deputy Office Managing Partner,  
Los Angeles / Century City; Global  
Co-Chair, REITs Industry Group  
Latham & Watkins LLP

Ana O'Brien, deputy office managing partner of Latham's Los Angeles and Century City offices and global co-chair of the firm's market-leading REITs industry group, stands out as both a visionary leader and one of the leading tax and REITs lawyers in the country. She advises clients in connection with their most sophisticated domestic and cross-border tax matters, such as federal taxation of REITs, corporations, and partnerships.

Regarded as one the preeminent thought leaders in the REIT field, O'Brien offers strategic and technical expertise on trending market developments, such as recapitalizations and data center development, to a number of California-based and global companies.



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COBURN LLP**

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CONGRATULATE OUR PARTNER  
**KACEY RICCOMINI**

named one of *Los Angeles Business Journal's*

**2025 Women of  
Influence: Attorneys**

A well-deserved  
recognition of her dedication





## WOMEN OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS

**FRANCES O'MEARA**

Partner

Wood Smith Henning &amp; Berman LLP

Frances O'Meara is a groundbreaking attorney. Her storied career has shattered glass ceilings, delivered countless defense verdicts for her clients, all while being giving of her time and energy to mentor and give back. She is widely sought out for her expertise by clients and the industry, and routinely speaks at industry events and publishes articles on emerging issues.

O'Meara, one of only 17 equity partners at Wood Smith Henning & Berman, stands as an exemplary professional malpractice attorney, nationally recognized for her exceptional contributions in errors and omissions defense. Certified by the California State Bar as a legal malpractice specialist, O'Meara navigates a diverse legal landscape, providing counsel to attorneys, accountants, architects, insurance agents, real estate brokers, appraisers, doctors, and nurses.

**JENNY PELAEZ**

Partner

King &amp; Spalding

Jenny Pelaez focuses her practice on complex commercial and class action litigation at the trial and appellate levels. She has extensive experience representing clients in high stakes matters involving claims under antitrust, securities, market manipulation and consumer protection laws. She also regularly represents clients in a wide range of industries in securities, class action, and derivative litigation.

Pelaez also has significant experience on the regulatory side, regularly responding to inquiries from state Attorneys General, the SEC, the DOJ and the CFPB on behalf of her major financial institution clients. On the regulatory side of her practice, she most recently successfully handled responses to a New York Attorney General inquiry into her client's payments practices.

**ALISON PLESSMAN**

Partner

Hueston Hennigan LLP

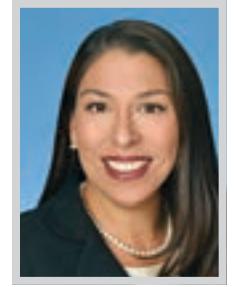
Alison Plessman leads many of Hueston Hennigan's highest profile matters and has cemented a reputation as one of the state's top litigators. Her wide-ranging practice includes matters involving wildland fire and debris flow, copyright infringement, contract, defamation, employment, securities fraud and trade secrets. She also advises clients on their most sensitive and confidential internal matters, including whistleblowing, discrimination, breach of fiduciary duty, trade secrets misappropriation, termination and unfair competition.

Plessman is currently representing PacifiCorp and Pacific Power in numerous high-stakes lawsuits stemming from the 2020 "Labor Day Fires" that burned over 500,000 acres across eight counties in Oregon and California.

**ANGELA REDDOCK-WRIGHT**Employment & Title IX Mediator  
Signature Resolution/RLG

Angela Reddock-Wright is a leading employment and Title IX attorney mediator with her own firm and as part of the distinguished panel of neutrals with Signature Resolution. She has practiced employment and labor law for nearly 30 years. In 2020, she transitioned to becoming a full-time neutral.

As a full-time neutral, Reddock-Wright has mediated some of the most sensitive and high profile cases involving private, public, entertainment, gaming, technology, union/labor, and non-profit sector employers, on a range of issues including race and gender discrimination, retaliation, sexual harassment, assault, hazing, bullying, pay equity, PAGA and wage and hour claims. Reddock-Wright also is a regular speaker, writer and trainer.

**MARYTZA REYES**

Partner

Sanchez &amp; Amador, LLP

Marytza Reyes is a distinguished legal professional and leader in the field of labor and employment law. As a partner at Sanchez & Amador, LLP, she represents Fortune 500 companies across numerous industries in complex California employment litigation. With nearly 25 years of experience, Reyes co-chairs S&A's employment litigation group, strategically defending corporate entities — with both unionized and non-unionized workforces — in discrimination, harassment, retaliation, whistleblower, and wrongful termination cases at all stages of litigation, including trials and appeals.

While she has extensive trial and arbitration experience, Reyes takes pride in her ability to collaborate across the aisle to achieve efficient, cost-effective resolutions that benefit all parties.

We congratulate our partner  
**KELLY SIOBHAN LAFFEY**  
on her selection to the  
*Los Angeles Business Journal's*  
prestigious list of  
"Women of Influence: Attorneys."

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WOMEN OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS



**KACEY RICCOMINI**  
Partner  
Thompson Coburn LLP

**K**acey Riccomini, a partner at Thompson Coburn LLP, is a strategic and results-driven employment lawyer and litigator, known for resolving complex disputes such as Private Attorneys General Act (PAGA) litigation, and high-stakes wage and hour class-action disputes and discrimination claims.

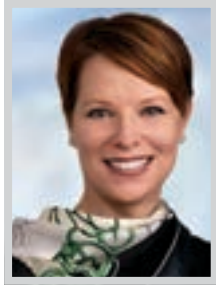
Riccomini advises Fortune 500 companies, privately held businesses, and individuals, across industries including automotive, financial services, hospitality, real estate, and technology – protecting them from multimillion-dollar claims, inflated attorney fees and unreasonable demands. She has prevailed in state and federal courts at all stages of litigation, including trial, and has successfully arbitrated and mediated numerous cases before the AAA and other dispute resolution agencies.



**NAEUN RIM**  
Partner; Leader, Trial, White Collar and Investigations Practice  
Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, LLP

**A**s leader of Manatt’s Trial, White Collar and Investigations practice, Naeun Rim has first-chaired numerous trials and arbitrations and successfully defended against multimillion-dollar civil lawsuits. Known for achieving favorable and effective results for clients facing high-stakes legal disputes, Rim is an established and highly sought-after advisor with a notable track record of success, including obtaining a judgment in favor of a publicly traded company in a fraud lawsuit seeking damages of \$100 million and winning a trial in a commercial real estate dispute.

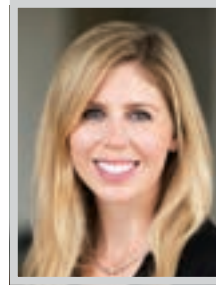
Rim leads the Manatt team representing Hanmi Financial Corporation, a publicly traded bank, in a shareholder derivative action. The Court found in favor of Hanmi.



**MELANIE RONEN**  
Partner; Chair, Employment & Labor  
Stradley Ronon Stevens & Young, LLP

**W**orking with clients across a broad array of industries, partner and chair of employment & labor at Stradley Ronon, Melanie Ronen advises on all aspects of employment law, including hiring, promotion, termination, privacy, wage and hour, disability and protected leave, and retaliation and whistleblower issues. She assists with the drafting and review of employment manuals and agreements, ensuring compliance with federal and state employment laws.

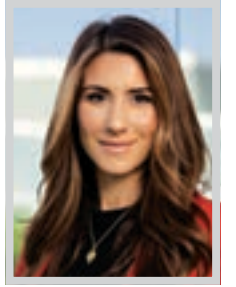
Ronen handles single-plaintiff and complex employment disputes in state and federal courts and arbitration involving discrimination, harassment, retaliation, wrongful termination, breach of contract, defamation, trade secret, unfair competition, and wage and hour issues, including class action and PAGA claims.



**JESSICA SGANGA**  
Partner  
Knobbe Martens

**J**essica Sganga is a partner in the trademark and brand protection practice at renowned intellectual property law firm Knobbe Martens. She is a sought-after IP lawyer by noteworthy, global brands in a broad range of industries, advising on domestic and international trademark, unfair competition, copyright, and advertising matters. Her experience in enforcement and adversarial proceedings, as well as counseling and prosecution, enables her to give clients well-rounded and thoughtful legal advice.

Sganga is an integral part of the Knobbe Martens team that serves as lead outside trademark counsel for California-based leading beauty brand Olaplex. She has also developed and implemented strategies for enforcing Mattel’s famous and iconic BARBIE and KEN brands.



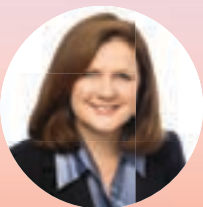
**COURTNEY SHEGERIAN**  
Partner; Co-Founder  
Shegerian Conniff LLP

**C**ourtney Shegerian is a founding member of Shegerian Conniff LLP and lead trial lawyer. Her practice focuses on employment law and includes all aspects of case management from case inception through trial, with particular emphasis in jury trials. She has tried numerous cases in both State and Federal Court and has argued in the California Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court of California. Throughout her career as an attorney, she has secured settlements and judgments in excess of \$100 million for her clients.

Shegerian is an active board member for the Peggy Albrecht Friendly House and has consistently volunteered for the Los Angeles County Bar Association’s Domestic Violence Program at Stanley Mosk and at the Sojourn Battered Women’s Shelter in Santa Monica.



**Norton Rose Fulbright congratulates partners Rebecca Winthrop and Debbie Birndorf-Zeiler for being honored on the *Los Angeles Business Journal’s* 2025 Women of Influence: Attorneys list.**



Spencer Fane is proud to celebrate Theresa Becerra’s outstanding achievement as a recipient of the Women of Influence Award – a powerful recognition of her leadership, vision, and impact.

Her journey is a shining example of what it means to break barriers, uplift others, and lead with courage and purpose. As a trailblazer in her field and a champion for women’s empowerment, Theresa continues to inspire future generations to dream boldly and lead confidently.



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Theresa Becerra, Partner  
tbecerra@spencerfane.com | 424.428.1128

WOMEN OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS



**RASHA SHIELDS**

Partner  
Jones Day

Rasha Shields has served as a first chair trial and appellate counsel in multiple matters and led sensitive independent and government investigations for a diverse range of clients. In the last 12-18 months, Shields has led several matters, including the defense of a university in litigation arising out of campus protests. She is highly sought after for her experience in investigations, having led important internal and government investigations arising from whistleblower complaints, employee misconduct, and procurement practices.

Shields was appointed by the Los Angeles Mayor to serve on the Board of Police Commissioners and appointed by the Chief Justice of the California Supreme Court to serve on the Supreme Court and Courts of Appeal Prevention of Bias Committee.



**MIWA SHODA**

Partner; Co-Chair, Japan Practice  
Jenner & Block

As the only full-time Japanese attorney at Jenner & Block, Miwa Shoda has overcome numerous obstacles to strengthen the US-Japan relationship and has been a key driver in the growth of the firm's Japan Practice.

Her experience includes representing Japanese companies in various commercial litigation, arbitration and disputes in both federal and state courts across the US, as well as arbitration associations including ICDR, AAA, and JAMS. She has also represented several Japanese companies in a multitude of various corporate transactions including M&A, joint ventures, and real estate transactions. She is one of the few professionals in the US capable of providing such specialized, nuanced legal counsel that bridges two fundamentally different legal and business cultures.



**LARA SHORTZ**

Los Angeles Office Managing Partner  
Michelman & Robinson, LLP

After several years serving as Michelman & Robinson, LLP's (M&R's) firm recruiting partner and head of its Labor & Employment practice, Lara Shortz was elevated to Los Angeles office managing partner in 2024. In this capacity, Shortz immediately set in motion an ambitious plan for the firm's LA headquarters — an initiative known as "ONE:LA." Through this strategy, Shortz is spearheading four key pillars of evolution for the office: growth (headcount and clients), professional development, community engagement, and enhanced internal communication and retention.

Under Shortz's direction, the LA office has been recruiting lateral hires in vital practice areas, while simultaneously supporting existing attorneys in developing their books of business.



**ALICE CHEN SMITH**

Managing Partner  
Yoka | Smith, LLP

Alice Chen Smith is the managing partner of Yoka | Smith and an experienced trial lawyer who has successfully tried many cases to verdict and obtained summary judgment wins. Her primary focus is litigating catastrophic personal injury cases, products liability and business litigation matters.

Smith practices throughout the State of California in trial and appellate courts. She was inducted into the American Board of Trial Advocates as a member of the Los Angeles Chapter in 2019, and currently serves as the membership co-chair. She is also the secretary-treasurer of the Association of Southern California Defense Counsel and will be its president in 2026. Born in Taiwan, Smith obtained a B.A. from the University of Chicago and her J.D. from Loyola Law School.



**ROSE SORENSEN**

Partner  
Snell & Wilmer

Rose Sorensen is a corporate and securities partner in Snell & Wilmer's Los Angeles office. Her law practice includes mergers and acquisitions, divestitures, reorganizations, commercial finance, private placements, venture capital, corporate governance, telecommunications services, and entity structure and formation.

Sorensen served as general counsel of a private cable operator and internet service provider with operations throughout California, Arizona, and Texas, which helped shape her balanced pragmatic approach in advising businesses on the complexities and functional considerations of their operations. In 2024, she was appointed to the board of directors of the Association of Corporate Growth's Los Angeles Chapter, and additionally serves as chair of the Membership Committee.

NOMINATE TODAY!

LOS ANGELES BUSINESS JOURNAL



The Los Angeles Business Journal is now accepting nominations for the 2025 M&A Awards!

Nominate for **Deals of the Year**, recognizing standout mergers and acquisitions that demonstrate strategic vision and market impact, or **Dealmakers of the Year**, highlighting the attorneys, lenders, investment bankers, private equity leaders, and due diligence professionals behind them.

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LightGabler congratulates our partner, **Chandra Beaton** for being a 2025 Women of Influence Honoree.

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WOMEN OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS



**KARINA STERMAN**  
Partner  
Greenberg Glusker LLP

**K**arina Sterman, partner in Greenberg Glusker’s Litigation and Employment Law Departments, is a creative and ardent advocate for her clients. Her litigation practice includes representing businesses in wage and hour class action and PAGA lawsuits as well as in discrimination, retaliation, wrongful termination, trade secret misappropriation, employee embezzlement, and other employment disputes.

Sterman has excelled in countless representative defense matters, including obtaining several full summary judgment and material summary adjudication rulings for her clients, defending clients to full defense verdicts in bench trials and jury trials, and negotiating hundreds of speedy and favorable class action settlements in complex, multi-location, multi-party wage and hour lawsuits.



**STACEY SULLIVAN**  
Partner  
Hill, Farrer & Burrill LLP

**T**ransactional attorney Stacey Sullivan is a partner at Hill Farrer and advises her clients on real estate, corporate, tax, and trust administration matters. A former CPA with a broad transactional background, she applies her extensive knowledge of the law to provide her clients with comprehensive legal advice, often navigating complex issues.

Sullivan’s practice focuses on representing property owners, investors, borrowers, lenders, and tenants in all types of real estate. She also has extensive experience negotiating and documenting a range of corporate transactions, from acquisitions and dispositions to conversions and mergers. She advises on the formation, operations, and dissolution of legal entities, including limited liability companies and partnerships, corporations, and limited and general partnerships.



**CYNTHIA SUN**  
Partner  
LTL Attorneys

**F**or the past 19 years, Cynthia Sun has been practicing law as a litigator in the areas of general liability, personal injury, product liability, breach of warranty, breach of contract, and consumer fraud. She has held partnership roles at two of the most prominent minority-owned law firms in Los Angeles, including her current firm, LTL Attorneys, in their consumer protection practice group.

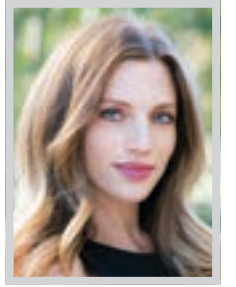
Sun recently won summary judgment in a consumer warranty case in LA County Superior Court (Yaghoubi v. Ford Motor Company) on behalf of the dealership. She also obtained summary adjudication in the same case on behalf of the manufacturer on the Consumer Legal Remedies Act and the Violation of Business and Professions Code 17200 claims.



**HANNAH SWEISS**  
Partner  
Fisher Phillips LLP

**A**s a partner and co-chair of the Fisher Phillips LLP’s Health-care Industry Group, Hannah Sweiss is a well-known, trusted litigator and key advisor to employers and represents employers in a variety of industries.

Sweiss has been lead counsel and handled the defense of hundreds of employers in complex class action wage and hour lawsuits, as well as representative lawsuits brought under California’s Private Attorneys General Act. She also handles a full range of Labor and Employment matters, from single plaintiff to multi-plaintiff actions with claims including, harassment, discrimination, retaliation, and wrongful termination. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Sweiss took the lead on advising employers nationwide and helped them navigate through the pandemic.



**CASEY SYPEK**  
Partner  
Miller Barondess, LLP

**B**usiness litigator Casey Sypek secures victories for clients in complex commercial disputes, including breach of contract, fraud, intellectual property, entertainment, and false advertising matters.

Sypek is lead counsel for the County of Los Angeles in a lawsuit exposing a multi-year bribery and kickback scheme involving a senior public official, a county employee, and major real estate developers. Alleging the defendants siphoned hundreds of millions in public funds, she recently intervened in a federal qui tam action, amplifying the case’s impact. In a parallel matter, Sypek is lead counsel for LA County against two former officials, an electrical contractor (Tel/Pro Voice and Data, Inc.), and several national prime contractors, alleging millions in fraudulent losses. She decisively defeated the defendants’ demurrers.



**CONGRATULATIONS**  
**RACHEL FISET**

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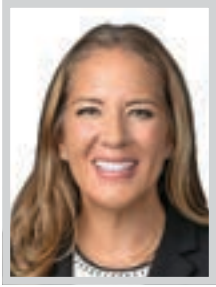
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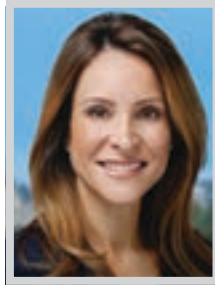
## WOMEN OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS

**TINA TELLADO**

Shareholder  
Polsinelli

With over two decades of experience in employment law, Polsinelli shareholder Tina Tellado has represented employers across a wide range of industries, including luxury fashion, retail, healthcare, and manufacturing. She is known for her adept handling of high-stakes litigation and regulatory matters and has built a reputation for successfully defending employers in nationwide class and collective actions, as well as complex employment disputes.

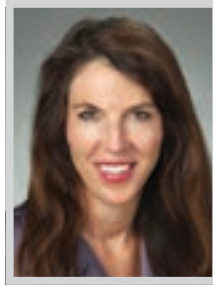
Tellado's work spans a diverse array of cases, from wage and hour disputes, such as overtime, minimum wage, and meal and rest break claims, to issues involving employee classification and independent contractor misclassification. She has managed large-scale litigation involving thousands of employees, directing teams through critical stages.

**VANESSA TERZIAN**

Partner  
Lagerlof, LLP

An adjunct professor of Wills and Trusts at Southwestern Law School, recently named a top attorney in Pasadena Magazine, and a Rising Star selected by Super Lawyers, Vanessa Terzian began her legal career as a trust officer for Wells Fargo. After witnessing firsthand the importance of proper planning, she pursued her own practice, helping countless families through her expertise in estate and tax planning, probate, and trust administration. Terzian draws on her real estate and business background in crafting comprehensive plans for her clients.

Terzian is a skilled public speaker, having conducted countless seminars throughout her legal career on various estate-planning topics, including kids protection planning, special needs planning, Medi-Cal planning, advanced tax planning, and asset protection.

**POLLY TOWILL**

Partner  
Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton

Polly Towill is recognized across California and among clients and peers as a "go-to" litigator and legal strategist, consistently earning exceptional results in bet-the-company lawsuits. In addition to being a top rainmaker at Sheppard Mullin, Towill is the co-office managing partner of the firm's largest office, overseeing nearly 200 attorneys and over 300 staff, and she leads the Los Angeles Growth Committee; Federal Whistleblower Retaliation Defense team; and Toxic Tort and Products Liability team.

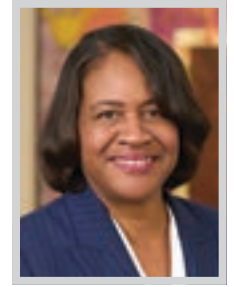
Recently, Towill obtained dismissal of three out of six claims filed against clients Nexstar Media Group, Inc. and CA-Lats South, LLC by property developer Omni Capital, LLC. The lawsuit arises out of Omni's decision to back out of an agreement to purchase property in "LA Times Square."

**JADE TRAN**

Partner; Senior Trial Analyst  
Wood Smith Henning & Berman LLP

Jade Tran is a highly acclaimed trial lawyer, recognized both nationally and locally for her skills in the courtroom. As a member of the prestigious American Board of Trial Advocates, Tran has established herself as a formidable force in the legal field. Her expertise lies in handling highly contentious, complex cases. She is also a member of WSHB's acclaimed Eleventh Hour Trial team.

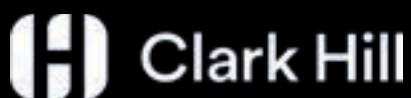
With over two decades of experience, Tran has demonstrated her versatility by successfully representing clients in a wide range of legal matters. She has navigated toxic tort, products liability, premises liability, and catastrophic injury cases for both private and public clients. Her practice extends to various areas, including personal injury, habitability, hospitality, and environmental/toxic exposure litigation.

**RHONDA TROTTER**

Partner  
Arnold & Porter

Rhonda Trotter is a first-chair trial lawyer who represents businesses in commercial disputes, including complex commercial, intellectual property, entertainment, products liability, employment, business torts, breach of contract, and false advertising.

In 2023, Trotter defended Visa in a consumer fraud class action brought in the Northern District of California. She succeeded in having all claims dismissed without leave to amend. In 2020, Trotter and her team secured a preliminary and permanent injunction on behalf of Nike in a Los Angeles federal court trademark and trade dress infringement lawsuit against a counterfeiter of Nike's infamous "Dunk" sneakers. She gained significant recognition in 2014 for helping legendary artist Prince secure copyright ownership of his master recordings from Warner Music.



## Congratulations, Maryam Danishwar!

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mdanishwar@clarkhill.com  
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on her selection to  
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*This recognition is a testament to her decades of legal excellence, commitment to mentorship, and the confidence she inspires in clients and colleagues alike.*

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## WOMEN OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS

**ANNIE TSAI**

Senior Counsel  
Foley & Lardner LLP

Since joining Foley & Lardner LLP, Annie Tsai has been a crucial asset to the ESG, Finance Practice, and Energy Sector teams. She goes the extra mile for her clients, advising in the development, acquisition, and financing of renewable energy projects.

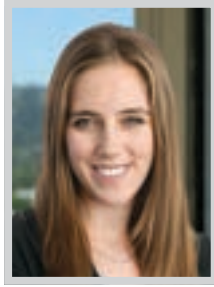
Prior to becoming an attorney, Tsai worked for Southern California Edison's Energy Procurement Group, where she optimized the utility's multibillion-dollar conventional and renewables portfolio. She advised negotiation teams on the value and risks of power purchase agreements, resource adequacy capacity contracts, energy call options, and firm energy delivery contracts. Currently, her practice focuses on representing lead lenders in syndicated construction, tax equity, and term debt financing for solar projects and portfolios.

**STEPHANIE VASQUEZ**

Partner  
Olivarez Madruga Law  
Organization LLP

A partner in Olivarez Madruga Law Organization (OMLO)'s venerated municipal practice, Stephanie Vasquez advises cities across California on key municipal matters including the Brown Act, public contracting, public works, First Amendment, election law, campaign finance and ethics and disclosure laws.

The daughter of immigrants, Vasquez learned from her parents the importance of showing up for her community. Vasquez has grown her practice to include serving in key advisory roles for local California governments. She serves as the city attorney for Bell Gardens and is currently assisting the city with the addition of a new state-of-the-art, multi-million John Anson Ford Park Regional Aquatics Center.

**CATHERINE VEENEMAN**

Partner  
Ervin Jessup Cohen LLP

Cate Veeneman is a partner in the Ervin Jessup Cohen Litigation Department, specializing in complex commercial, employment, and construction litigation. She regularly works in both state and federal court, and has represented a broad range of clients, from individuals and rising companies in the real estate and hospitality industries to national retail companies and lending institutions.

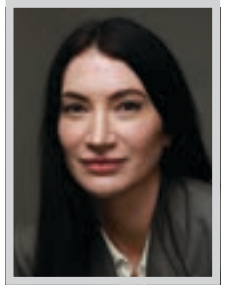
Veeneman has published several articles on class action as well as food and beverage legal issues and was recognized by J.D. Supra in their 2022 Readers' Choice Awards as a top author. She has also given several presentations in the Los Angeles community regarding employment legal issues, including an analysis of the effect that recent changes in California law have had on employee classification.

**ELAINE VUKADINOVICH**

Partner; Co-Chair,  
Labor & Employment Group  
Musick, Peeler & Garrett LLP

Elaine Vukadinovich is a partner in the Labor and Employment department of Musick, Peeler & Garrett's Los Angeles office, and serves on the firm's executive committee. For over 25 years, she has represented and advised private and public employers in a variety of industries including universities, maintenance, security, healthcare, regional centers, restaurants, religious entities, and various non-profit entities, among others. She counsels employers, audits employer practices, provides training, and develops strategic planning with respect to wage and hour issues.

Vukadinovich represents employers in labor and employment litigation in state and federal courts.

**NATALIE WEATHERFORD**

Partner  
Taylor & Ring

Taylor & Ring senior partner Natalie Weatherford is a relentless advocate for survivors of sexual assault, abuse, and misconduct, taking on powerful institutions and corporations that have significant financial backing as well as school districts and administrators. Her ability to overcome hurdles like victim-blaming and legal barriers, paired with her courtroom prowess, sharp instincts and deep empathy empower her clients to testify confidently while uncovering critical evidence to strengthen their cases.

In 2024, Weatherford secured a confidential settlement against the Los Angeles Unified School District for several students who were abused by their teacher during the late 80s and 90s. She secured a \$35 million verdict for a woman who was sexually assaulted by a track coach.

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YOKA | SMITH congratulates our firm's managing partner, **ALICE CHEN SMITH** on being selected as one of the Women of Influence: Attorneys by the Los Angeles Business Journal.

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WOMEN OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS



**AMY WELLS**  
Partner  
Cox, Castle & Nicholson

Amy Wells is the lead partner of Cox, Castle & Nicholson's Institutional Investor team and has more than thirty years of experience representing institutional investors in all aspects of complex real estate, infrastructure, and private equity investments. Wells' expertise spans real estate, infrastructure, and private equity transactions, including both domestic and international investments, and she has a deep understanding of current market terms and opportunities.

Wells specializes in structuring, documenting, and negotiating strategic relationships such as joint ventures and commingled funds, as well as fiduciary relationships between institutional investors and their consultants and advisors. She works extensively with state, city, and county public pension funds on their investment activities.



**REBECCA WINTHROP**  
Partner  
Norton Rose Fulbright US LLP

Norton Rose Fulbright US partner Rebecca Winthrop has spent nearly 35 years practicing financial insolvency and bankruptcy law.

Today, Winthrop has a national practice and works primarily with clients in the healthcare, manufacturing, aviation and agriculture industries. One of her most notable cases involved her representation of the largest property damage claimant in Pacific Gas and Electric Company's bankruptcy case, which suffered millions of dollars in damages in the Paradise, California fire. She has handled a wide range of matters, from restructuring millions of dollars of equipment lease obligations for a stand-alone emergency room system in Texas, to negotiating the purchase of a two-story tall million-dollar forklift used to construct nuclear submarines in New Jersey.



**DEBRA WONG YANG**  
Partner; Chair,  
Crisis Management Practice Group  
Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP

Debra Wong Yang has built a career resolving important and "bet-the-company" matters for companies, individuals and institutions. She is known for her skills in strategic planning and business focused advice that utilizes her background in white collar, litigation, and investigations. With an extensive background in both the public and private sector, she is the go-to advisor for tech and fintech entities, early-stage companies and traditional corporate businesses for guidance on their most complex and high-stakes matters.

Yang critical representations, often high-profile and highly confidential, involving a variety of industries, economic sectors, regulatory bodies, law enforcement agencies, global jurisdictions and all types of proceedings.



**STEPHANIE YONEKURA**  
Partner; Global Head of Investigations,  
White Collar and Fraud  
Hogan Lovells

Stephanie Yonekura is the global head of Hogan Lovells' Investigations, White Collar, and Fraud practice, which is comprised of more than 150 lawyers across 20 jurisdictions globally. Having served as a federal prosecutor for over 14 years, Yonekura has specialized knowledge of the hot-button issues that are considered in every stage of any government investigation.

Yonekura was previously acting US Attorney in the US Attorney's Office for the Central District of California. Under her leadership, the office investigated the hacking of one of the world's largest entertainment companies, reportedly by a foreign government. As the Acting US Attorney, Yonekura was an active participant in the larger DOJ community.



**LISA ZANG**  
Partner  
Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati

Lisa Zang is a technology litigator with specific expertise in trade secret and other IP matters. She is respected not only for her expertise in densely technical litigation, but also for her commitment to diverse communities. Zang represents industry leaders, start-ups, and non-profit organizations over a range of complex and novel technical disputes. She litigates and advises clients on matters across all categories of IP and has handled the full spectrum of technology, from AI-based cybersecurity software, non-volatile memory, and commercial drones to therapeutics and diagnostic assays.

A Caltech graduate, Zang draws on her rigorous technical training to master the technology in each matter and develop a winning strategy. The same is true in her handling of esoteric damages and economics issues.

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## WOMEN OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS

**CANDICE ZEE**

Shareholder  
Vedder Price

Shareholder Candice Zee is a member of the Vedder Price Labor & Employment practice area within the firm's Los Angeles office. Throughout her career, Zee has represented and defended numerous multi-state and international corporations on all aspects of employment litigation, including allegations of discrimination, retaliation, harassment, defamation, and intentional infliction of emotional distress. She has won numerous cases on summary judgments for her clients, and in particular has represented several non-profit hospital clients.

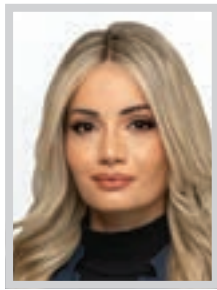
Zee has helped resolve hundreds of matters through mediation and informal negotiations, all while working alongside her opposing counsel to help minimize costs to her clients. Her practice also includes handling traditional labor issues.

**H. ANNITA ZHONG**

Partner  
Irell & Manella LLP

Partner at Irell & Manella LLP, Annita Zhong focuses on patent litigation, contested patent office proceedings and licensing in the US, the European Union and China. She has deep experience litigating before federal and state courts, the International Trade Commission, arbitral panels and the Patent Trial and Appeal Board (PTAB).

Zhong has served as lead inter partes review counsel and co-counsel in ex parte reexamination in diverse areas of technology at the PTAB. Some of her recent successes include obtaining non-institution decisions in OLED display and 5G wireless technologies. With an extensive background in engineering and research, she is well versed in technical areas such as semiconductor fabrication and packaging, computer architecture, telecommunications, A.I., renewable energy and chemicals and materials.

**ROSIE ZILIFYAN**

Managing Trial Attorney  
Shegerian & Associates

Rosie Zilifyan is a renowned employment litigator with a proven track record of defeating arbitration and securing significant settlements for wrongfully terminated employees. She is at the forefront of employment law, leveraging emerging legal developments to challenge arbitration clauses and expand employee protections.

Zilifyan has successfully defeated arbitration in several high-stakes cases, ensuring that plaintiffs could pursue their claims in court rather than being forced into private arbitration. These victories were based on new laws prohibiting the enforcement of arbitration clauses under the Ending Forced Arbitration of Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Act. In 2024, she secured \$15 million in settlements. Additionally, Zilifyan is actively involved in mentoring attorneys within the firm.

**ALLISON LIBEU**

Partner  
Hueston Hennigan LLP

Allison Libeu has been instrumental as lead or co-lead counsel in securing some of Hueston Hennigan's most significant trial and arbitration victories, and many of her results have been precedent setting. She litigates high-stakes business disputes across a variety of areas, including business torts, contracts, class actions, securities fraud and trade secrets.

Among a string of big wins in the past couple of years, Libeu co-lead teams that secured half-billion in damages for Monster Energy in a pair of trials against rival energy drink company VPX, involving claims that included false advertising, trade secrets theft and trademark infringement. The damages included a verdict that is believed to be the largest Lanham Act award in history, and one that is among the largest trademark awards ever.

## State Agencies Gather to Collaborate to Better Serve Californians' Legal Aid Needs

Seventeen state agencies, including the Department of Social Services, the Civil Rights Department, and the Department of Aging, gathered in San Francisco late last year for a convening to ideate on how government agencies can collaborate with legal aid nonprofits to provide highly effective, equitable, and enhanced services to the public. The entities specifically discussed ways to collaborate in improving legal aid services related to homelessness, mental health, immigration, and consumer protection. The interagency convening was hosted by the State Bar of California, the California Access to Justice Commission (CalATJ), and the Legal Aid Association of California (LAAC).

Legal aid nonprofits are one of the principal means by which low-income and underserved Californians access government programs, making improved collaboration among state agencies and nonprofits critical.

The convening drew inspiration from the White House Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable's (LAIR) success at the national level. LAIR convenes 28 federal agencies to improve coordination in expanding access to justice. The California interagency convening also drew on insights from the State Bar's California Justice Gap Study. Released in 2019, the study found that 55 percent of Californians — at all income levels — experienced at least one civil legal issue in the past year. It also found that Californians received no or inadequate legal help for 85 percent of their problems. A new

Justice Gap Study will be released early next year.

In 2024, the State Bar of California will provide more than 100 legal aid organizations, and public defenders offices in up to all 58 counties, with more than \$200 million, a record grant amount. The State Bar's Legal Services Trust Fund Commission (LSTFC) administers the grant programs. The Commission recently released its Five-Year Strategic Plan (2024-2028), which is focused on increasing access to legal aid, including through greater collaboration and coordination with a diverse range of voices, and collaborative discussions and convenings.

"As the State Bar's Legal Services Trust Fund Commission continues to provide record amounts of grant money to legal aid organizations statewide, this collaboration and continuing dialogue with our partner and state agencies will better inform all of us about increasing access to legal aid and ensuring our assistance has the maximum impact," said Erica Connolly, State Bar LSTFC chair. "Partnerships between government and legal aid entities are essential to expanding access to critical services."

CalATJ funds and facilitates collaboration among stakeholders across California to reduce the state's civil justice gap. LAAC provides advocacy, training, and other support to over 100 legal aid providers, enabling comprehensive legal help for low-income and underserved Californians.

"We know low-income clients benefit



when government and legal aid programs work together to meet their legal needs," said Catherine Blakemore, CalATJ Chair. "CalATJ is pleased to be part of this initial convening and support this important dialogue."

"We are thrilled to bring together state leaders to explore how civil legal aid can support their important work for low-income and vulnerable Californians," said Lorin Kline, LAAC Director of Advocacy. "This opportunity to

collaborate and meaningfully improve access to justice and state programs is invaluable."

*The State Bar of California's mission is to protect the public and includes the primary functions of licensing, regulation and discipline of attorneys; the advancement of the ethical and competent practice of law; and support of efforts for greater access to, and inclusion in, the legal system. Learn more at [calbar.ca.gov](http://calbar.ca.gov).*