



LOS ANGELES BUSINESS JOURNAL
**CORPORATE
COUNSEL
AWARDS 2026**

**HONOREES
& FINALISTS**



DIAMOND SPONSORS



Advancing Imaging Through
Innovation & Technology

GOLD SPONSORS





The 2026 LABJ Corporate Counsel Awards Recap

Welcome to our annual special section honoring the leading general counsel attorneys in the Los Angeles area for 2026. Considering the fact that the Los Angeles region has long been known for its status as a hub for legal though leaders and expert attorneys, being a standout in the in-house field for our many iconic businesses in the region is particularly impressive.

Our celebration of these examples of corporate legal leadership excellence took place on Thursday, October 22, 2026. The Los Angeles Business Journal honored the accomplishments and significant roles that these in-house business attorneys play in the success of their enterprises.

Honorees in various categories were recognized for exceptional legal skill and achievement across the

full spectrum of responsibility, exemplary leadership and for contributions to the Los Angeles community at large.

In the following pages we share biographical information on the honorees and finalists from what was a truly inspirational event and shed some additional light on some of the premier examples of corporate counsel practitioners among us today.

Many thanks to our Diamond



JOE GRETO

Sponsors, **BYD | RIDE, Greenberg Glusker LLP** and **RadNet**; our Gold Sponsors **Dentons; Ralphs** and **Sidley Austin LLP** and beverage sponsor, **Akerman LLP**.

We hope you enjoy this special section, which contains some unique insights on what exactly it means to be a leading in-house attorney in today’s business climate.



Prime Healthcare

Congratulations!
2026 Corporate Counsel of the Year
Honored as Finalists by the Los Angeles Business Journal



Erica Reilley Swanholt, Esq.
Vice President &
General Counsel



Billie Pierce, Esq.
Vice President,
Deputy General Counsel &
Chief Employment Counsel



GREENBERG GLUSKER IS A PROUD SPONSOR OF THE

Los Angeles Business Journal **Corporate Counsel Awards 2026**

Greenberg Glusker is a full-service law firm based in Los Angeles, serving businesses, organizations, and individuals globally for over 65 years. Guided by a people-first philosophy and a genuine passion for the law, our attorneys are committed to unlocking solutions in even the most complex matters. *Driven by results, powered by people, led by legacy.*

PRACTICE AREAS

- Bankruptcy, Reorganization & Capital Recovery
- Branded Consumer Products
- Corporate
- Cybersecurity & Privacy
- Digital Media & Content Publishing
- Employment
- Entertainment
- Environment
- Intellectual Property
- Litigation
- Private Client Services
- Real Estate
- Sports
- Tax
- Technology





2026 HONOREES



CORPORATE COUNSEL OF THE YEAR – PUBLIC COMPANY HONOREE

JENNIFER FISHER GOLDEN

Director & Senior Counsel; General Counsel
The Boeing Company; Aurora Flight Sciences

Prior to joining Boeing in February 2012, Jennifer Fisher Golden was general counsel for Marshall & Swift/Boeckh, the leading provider of building valuation software, data and technologies to the appraisal, assessor and property insurance industries. Jennifer began her career as a corporate & securities associate at Mayer Brown LLP, one of the world's largest law firms.

As a Boeing executive, Golden provides strategic legal counsel to the company's engineering and research and development teams. She proudly identifies as a "rocket scientist confidante" and is a strong advocate for empowering individuals to express their authentic selves in all areas of life, both at Boeing and in the community. Golden works closely with talented engineers and senior leaders in the Engineering, Test & Technology (ET&T) division to drive advancements in innovative technologies, including aerodynamics, fuel efficiency, autonomous flight, advanced manufacturing, sustainability, and artificial intelligence.

In her role as general counsel for Aurora Flight Sciences, a Boeing subsidiary known for its cutting-edge aerospace platforms and autonomous systems, Golden plays a vital role on the senior leadership team. She oversees the legal function of the company and collaborates with cross-functional teams, including Engineering, Contracts, Supply Chain, Business Development, and Operations, to ensure regulatory compliance, mitigate risks, and support strategic initiatives that promote growth and innovation in the aerospace sector.

Golden is transformational executive and strategic adviser who drives growth and innovation at Boeing. She excels in navigating uncertain environments, crafting creative solutions, mitigating risk, and championing business-focused advocacy.



CORPORATE COUNSEL OF THE YEAR – LARGE PRIVATE COMPANY HONOREE

ERIK GRAHAM-SMITH

General Counsel
FloQast

With more than a decade of experience in the field, Erik Graham-Smith is leading the charge as general counsel at FloQast and propelling the company to success. Graham-Smith is responsible for overseeing all aspects of FloQast's Legal, Compliance, InfoSec, Privacy, Facilities, HR and Recruiting teams.

Prior to joining FloQast, Graham-Smith practiced law at Kleinberg, Kaplan, Wolff & Cohen, P.C. where his practice concentrated on investor activism, M&A and general corporate and securities law. Graham-Smith began his career as an associate at Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft LLP where his practice focused on M&A, corporate governance and shareholder activism.

Graham-Smith's experience and community involvement efforts complement his remarkable achievements at FloQast. Starting as a solo general counsel in 2017 to now having built out significant Legal and Compliance teams, he has overseen nearly \$100 million in closed deals while at FloQast. In the past two years alone he has managed the Series C and Series D funding rounds — helping FloQast secure an aggregate of \$150 million, ran two Tender Offers for all employees and shareholders, facilitated global expansion and new subsidiaries in the UK, Germany and Australia, initiated transformative internal processes, and achieved SOC 2 and ISO 27001 certifications. Not to mention, as FloQast scaled from 160 to more than 560 employees, Graham-Smith played a pivotal role in overseeing HR and Recruiting, skillfully navigating the challenge of expanding the internal operations department. Graham-Smith's diverse skill set, resilience, and strategic leadership have propelled both his personal growth and his direct impact on FloQast's success.



Advancing Imaging Through Innovation and Technology



CONGRATULATIONS TO **DAVID J. KATZ**



*Los Angeles Business Journal's Community
Impact Corporate Counsel of the Year Award*

- ▶ With **440+ imaging centers** across eleven states, **11,000+ employees**, and more than **1,000 contracted radiologists**, RadNet is the largest outpatient radiology provider in the country.
- ▶ **Founded in 1981** - Over four decades of experience and leading the imaging industry.
- ▶ **Emphasis placed on scale and multi-modality strategy.** One-stop shopping for referral sources and health plans.
- ▶ Managing partner of **27 hospital and health system joint ventures**, each with multiple sites.
- ▶ **Quadrupled size of company** since 2006.
- ▶ Publicly traded (**NASDAQ: RDNT**).
- ▶ Named by **TIME magazine** as one of the **"World's Most Impactful Companies."**
- ▶ Voted one of the **"Most Wired" Imaging Companies** by Imaging Technology News.
- ▶ Reported as **#1 Imaging Center Chain** by Radiology Business Journal.

RANK

#1

Largest Outpatient Imaging
Company in the US

* RadiologyBusiness.com

SIZE

440+

Imaging Centers
Across 11 States

GROWTH

4x

Increase in Size
Since 2006

VOLUME

12mil+ 2mil+

Annual
Exams

Annual
Mammograms

LEADERSHIP

45yrs

Leading the
Imaging Industry

APPROVAL

95%

Patient Satisfaction
Rating



2026 HONOREES



CORPORATE COUNSEL OF THE YEAR – MID-SIZE PRIVATE COMPANY HONOREE

GENE WHITNEY

General Counsel
HYBE America

Gene Whitney, general counsel of HYBE America, turns legal judgment into organizational momentum. A Los Angeles-based subsidiary of HYBE Corp., HYBE America is a global entertainment and media company spanning music, film, television and technology, with a label and publishing portfolio that includes Blue Highway Records, Big Machine Music, and Quality Control Music.

Whitney has built a career of more than two decades at the intersection of music, technology, media, and intellectual property. Before becoming General Counsel of HYBE America in January 2026, Whitney held senior legal and business-affairs positions at Universal Music Group, Vevo, SoundCloud, Meta, Amazon Music, and Riot Games. The defining challenge of Whitney’s career has been solving legal and commercial problems for businesses that are evolving faster than the conventional legal playbook.

Whitney joined HYBE America at a pivotal moment of leadership transition, organizational transformation, and international expansion. As general counsel, Whitney oversees legal strategy throughout North and South America, guides corporate governance across HYBE America’s business units, and supports the company’s continued growth in international markets. Since joining the company, Whitney led the negotiation of the Amazon Music merchandise agreement supporting BTS’ ARIRANG World Tour.

Whitney’s direct impact is to provide the connective legal architecture that allows a diverse, multinational organization to operate more effectively as one enterprise. He brings greater consistency to decision-making, strengthens governance and accountability, protects the company’s artists and intellectual property, and develops practical risk frameworks that enable business leaders to pursue ambitious initiatives with speed and confidence.



CORPORATE COUNSEL OF THE YEAR – GROWING PRIVATE COMPANY HONOREE

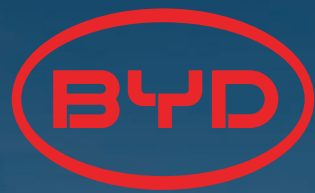
BETTY BALES

Vice President; Head of Legal
Toho International, Inc

Betty Bales is the vice president and head of legal at Toho International, Inc., which manages the licensing, marketing and distribution of Toho’s movies – including the Godzilla franchise and other products. After graduating from NYU School of Law, Bales began her legal career as a litigator at the entertainment powerhouse Alschuler, Grossman & Pines, working on a variety of commercial litigation cases, before starting a decades-long career as in-house counsel at some of the premier entertainment and consumer products companies in the world, including Universal Studios and Mattel. That breadth of experience has culminated in her current role at Toho, where she heads the Legal Department.

Bales believes that effective in-house counsel must embrace a dual role: protecting the company from legal risk while also helping the business achieve its objectives. She has built her career around balancing those responsibilities, an approach that has made her an indispensable resource for dealmakers – someone they seek out rather than avoid. She has contributed to the growth of the organizations she has worked for, including spearheading deals worth more than \$100 million during her career. Since joining Toho, Bales has built out the Legal Department and implemented structures and processes designed to increase efficiency and better support the company as its business has grown and evolved.

Bales’ litigation background informs the judgment she brings to that role. Having seen firsthand how disputes arise, she can distinguish between issues that present meaningful litigation risk and those that are largely theoretical, allowing her to focus negotiations on what really matters.



CONGRATULATIONS JOHN ZHUANG

Huge congratulations to John Zhuang, BYD | RIDE's Head of Legal Counsel, for his recognition as a finalist in the Los Angeles Business Journal's Corporate Counsel Awards.





2026 HONOREES



CORPORATE COUNSEL OF THE YEAR – NONPROFIT/GOVERNMENT /MUNICIPAL HONOREE

CHRISTINE ROSELAND

Senior Staff Counsel, Investment Transactions
Los Angeles County Employees Retirement Association

Christine Roseland serves as the lead senior staff counsel for investments and commercial transactions at the Los Angeles County Employees Retirement Association (LACERA), the independent governmental entity that administers and manages the retirement fund for the County of Los Angeles and participating outside districts. She leads LACERA's Transactions group, which handles every investment-related and commercial transactional matter across the organization, partnering closely with the Investments Division and other divisions to advance business objectives while managing legal and organizational risk.

The scale of what Roseland's team accomplishes with limited resources is impressive. In calendar year 2025, the group closed 469 investment and vendor transactions representing an aggregate contract value of \$8.38 billion. Among those transactions, investments span all asset classes including private equity, public markets, hedge funds and credit, real assets, portfolio analytics, and real estate while vendor agreements covered IT systems and information security, accounting, administrative services, communications, human resources, and other enterprise needs.

Roseland's success rests on a combination that is genuinely hard to find: technical excellence across an unusually broad range of asset classes, disciplined process design that lets a lean team carry enterprise-scale volume, relentless attention to cost through fee negotiations and tax-related and other recoveries that generate substantial savings, and the kind of trusted, deeply collaborative client relationships that let her anticipate business needs before they arrive. Her leadership directly advances LACERA's mission to produce, protect and provide the promised benefits and firmly establishes her as an outstanding legal leader in the independent governmental entity space.



COMMUNITY IMPACT CORPORATE COUNSEL OF THE YEAR HONOREE

DAVID KATZ

Executive Vice President; Chief Legal Officer; UK Executive Sponsor
RadNet, Inc.

David J. Katz serves as executive vice president, chief legal officer, and UK executive sponsor of RadNet, Inc., a NASDAQ-listed healthcare company with the largest network of outpatient radiology centers in the United States, and the largest suite of artificial intelligence products for radiology. RadNet is at the forefront of population health initiatives with the motto that early detection and diagnosis generate better outcomes.

Katz has led the extraordinary growth and global transformation of the company's legal department in the last six years – expanding it from a one-person operation into a highly diverse international team of almost 20 professionals and staff. Under his strategic leadership, the department has played a central role in over 100 acquisition transactions, providing legal guidance across traditional radiology services, advanced technology, and artificial intelligence initiatives.

As RadNet's market capitalization has grown from \$1 billion to over \$5 billion, Katz has built out RadNet's legal services to span more than a dozen practice areas, including mergers and acquisitions, corporate governance, compliance, privacy, employment, real estate, healthcare regulation, intellectual property, securities and international law. He has established the department as a comprehensive, business-oriented trusted legal partner, earning recognition for excellence, innovation, and operational impact.

Beyond overseeing legal operations, as part of the C-Suite, Katz serves as a trusted advisor to RadNet's executive leadership and Board of Directors, offering strategic counsel on high-stakes legal matters and enterprise risk. His foresight and proactive approach have helped the company successfully navigate complex legal and regulatory landscapes.



ASSOCIATE / DEPUTY CORPORATE COUNSEL OF THE YEAR HONOREE

NATALIE GRIFFITHS

Senior Vice President; Associate General Counsel; Chief Compliance Officer
Inter-Con Security Systems, Inc.

Natalie Griffiths has been a valuable member of the Inter-Con Security Legal Team for almost two decades. During that time, she has held roles of increasing responsibility and, for at least the past decade, has led the company’s labor function and compliance function. In her current role at the company’s chief compliance officer, Griffiths has navigated the company through countless regulatory changes, entries into new jurisdictions, collective bargaining negotiations, and unprecedented macroeconomic events.

Griffiths currently leads a large team at Inter-Con and is widely respected in both the Los Angeles legal community and in the security industry. She is a “go-to” resource for virtually every department head within the company and she is frequently involved in the company’s most critical strategic cross-departmental initiatives.

In addition, Griffiths serves as a regular speaker at various labor and employment conferences and is also actively involved in the greater Los Angeles community. She represents Inter-Con on a variety of supplier and other councils, including the National Minority Supplier Development Council.

We congratulate Christopher Norton

Chief Legal Officer & Corporate Counsel Awards Finalist

CHRISTOPHER NORTON exemplifies outstanding leadership as Chief Legal Officer of World Oil. His strategic guidance, integrity, and commitment to excellence continue to strengthen our organization and drive its success.

For more than 90 years, World Oil has served businesses and communities through energy, environmental services, and recycling. The values behind our legacy—integrity, innovation and responsibility—are reflected in Chris’s leadership every day.

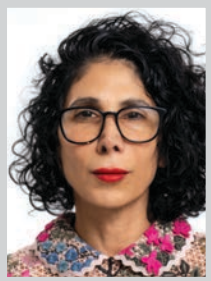
Congratulations, Chris, on this well-deserved recognition and your continued outstanding leadership!



worldoilcorp.com



2026 FINALISTS



CARLA BEDROSIAN
Chief Legal Officer
Xsolla

Carla Bedrosian has redefined the role of the chief legal officer at Xsolla, transforming legal from a traditional support function into a strategic partner that helps the company innovate, scale, and navigate global complexity. With more than 25 years of legal experience advising multinational companies on complex regulatory, litigation, and intellectual property matters, Bedrosian brings a unique ability to connect legal strategy with business growth.

Since joining Xsolla two and a half years ago, she has built and modernized a legal operation designed to support a global company's rapid expansion across more than 200 markets, strengthening compliance capabilities, creating infrastructure to implement new technologies such as AI.



BRANDON BRAGA
General Counsel
The Agency

As general counsel of The Agency, Brandon Braga embodies the essence of strategic legal leadership within the luxury real estate industry. With a role that extends far beyond traditional legal counsel, Braga is pivotal in shaping The Agency's strategic direction and ensuring its legal and ethical standards are upheld across all operations.

In his multifaceted role, Braga oversees The Agency's and its affiliates' legal affairs, encompassing litigation, intellectual property, corporate governance, and franchising matters. Braga is instrumental in developing, implementing, and supervising comprehensive risk management policies and procedures that safeguard the company's assets and reputation.



STEPHEN CHU
CHRO; General Counsel
InStride

At InStride, Stephen Chu has served in several enterprise leadership capacities, including interim co-CEO during executive transitions. These assignments required him to manage operational priorities, support customers and partners, guide employees, and make business decisions beyond the traditional legal function. He has used that experience to make Legal and People a more integrated strategic function.

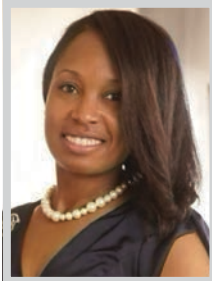
These roles afforded Chu the opportunity to learn about the different sides of InStride's business and people, knowledge that is invaluable to him as chief legal and people officer. Chu adheres to the doctrine of over-preparing, particularly when it comes to knowing the business.



MEGAN COSBY
Senior Legal Counsel
Lululemon

Megan Cosby's nearly three decades of legal experience span entertainment, technology, retail, media, and marketing. At lululemon, she has built and managed the legal team advising on complex matters across marketing, product, sustainability, and innovation, while overseeing legal work on partnerships with the US Open, Peloton, American Express, Team Canada and other prominent organizations. Her impact, however, extends well beyond exceptional legal counsel.

Cosby is known for being a thoughtful, gracious leader who champions her direct reports, celebrates their achievements, and intentionally advances their professional development. She also generously mentors newer lawyers and law students.



TIFFANY CRUZ
Director, Global Employment Counsel & Health & Safety Compliance
G-P

Prior to becoming a lawyer, Tiffany Cruz worked as an engineer for the global powerhouse Caterpillar, Inc. After graduating from law school, she clerked for two federal District Court Judges in her hometown of St. Louis, Missouri. Then, Cruz spent nearly a decade as a California litigator.

Five years ago, Cruz received the unique opportunity to take her technology curiosity and love for learning new areas of law to the industry-creator and No. 1 Global Employer of Record, G-P / Globalization Partners, where she has assisted with establishing labor and employment documentation and processes for G-P's new entities globally, and she currently provides international labor and employment law guidance.



JOHN DeFRANCE
Senior Attorney
The Kroger Co., Ralphs

With 18 years at Kroger, John DeFrance has expertly managed the company's national commercial real estate legal needs, both transactional and litigation, making a profound impact on the company's operations and success. DeFrance's deep experience in sophisticated commercial real estate matters, particularly in the shopping center space, has been invaluable.

Although he started in the private sector, DeFrance has dedicated most of his career to making Kroger's real estate department a success. He acts as a trusted advisor to the businesspeople in the Kroger Real Estate Department, navigating through every type of legal need that arises. John is a mentor and problem solver, recognized for his dedication to the grocery industry and the communities, customers, and employees that it impacts.



JOHN ERIKSON
Managing Director, Head of Legal
Wedbush

John L. Erikson; managing director and head of legal at Wedbush Securities, is a highly respected legal leader whose expertise, sound judgment, and strategic counsel have made him an invaluable asset to the firm. As a key member of the company's in-house legal department, Erikson oversees a broad range of litigation, regulatory, corporate, and transactional matters while serving as a trusted advisor to senior management and the boards of both Wedbush Securities and Wedbush Financial Services.

With nearly three decades of legal experience, Erikson has built a distinguished career specializing in securities law and complex litigation. His transition from private practice to in-house allowed him to apply his legal acumen directly to the business challenges facing a leading financial services firm.



LISA GOK
Chief Legal Officer
Cetera Financial Group

Lisa Gok has been a pillar of integrity and innovation in the Los Angeles legal community for nearly three decades, and a transformative force within Cetera for the past 13 years. Her career is a testament to the power of principled leadership, strategic foresight, and unwavering dedication to justice and corporate stewardship.

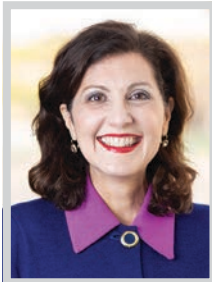
In 2012, Gok joined Cetera as deputy general counsel during a period of significant upheaval. Her leadership was instrumental in guiding the firm through a Chapter 11 restructuring and later securing private equity ownership in 2018. Under her direction, Cetera's legal team not only stabilized but thrived – reducing litigation volume and cutting costs by two-thirds. Now, Gok leads a robust legal department of 16 attorneys and 10 paralegals/analysts.



ROY HADAVI
General Counsel
Flynt Management Group

Roy Hadavi is an example of what any business would want in an attorney. He has a reputation for being brilliant and highly knowledgeable of the law but also possesses problem solving abilities. He does not get perturbed by problems and is able to work through them from different angles and perspectives. Hadavi is able to relate to people of all different kinds of backgrounds and is able to do so while still being a zealous advocate for his company.

Hadavi is also a member of his local city council in Woodland Hills where he contributes his expertise to community issues. Because of his love of his city and neighborhood, he makes time to attend local meetings to voice his opinion on issues impacting the community.



DAWN HAGHIGHI
General Counsel
Murcor Inc., National Real Estate Services

Dawn Haghighi is a transformative executive leader at the intersection of law, risk, and technology including AI and cyber); equal parts strategist, enterprise architect, and culture builder. An accomplished general counsel, independent director, committee chair, adjunct law professor, community volunteer, and thought leader, Haghighi advises CEOs, corporate boards, and C-suite executives across public, private, nonprofit, and trade association sectors globally.

As the first general counsel for the Murcor family of companies, Haghighi architected a modern, business embedded legal function that accelerates growth while strengthening resilience. She also designed and leads the enterprise insurance risk program.

Dentons is proud to sponsor the Los Angeles Business Journal's 2026 Corporate Counsel Awards, recognizing outstanding in-house counsel who drive business growth, foster innovation, and provide strategic leadership within their organizations.

Congratulations to Christine Son of Dine Brands on being shortlisted for this well-deserved recognition!

**Dentons, the law firm
of the future is here.**

[dentons.com](https://www.dentons.com)



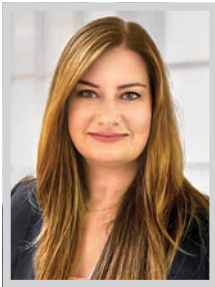
2026 FINALISTS



MILAD HASSANI
General Counsel
Cydcor

Milad Hassani is general counsel of Cydcor LLC, an Agoura Hills-based, nationally recognized provider of in-person customer acquisition for enterprise brands, where he has served since September 2014. He is responsible for all aspects of the legal affairs of Cydcor and its affiliated companies, and is chief legal advisor to every level of management and to the governing board across strategy, risk mitigation, acquisitions and divestitures, commercial contracts, intellectual property, labor and employment, litigation and dispute resolution, immigration, data privacy, corporate governance, international expansion, and TCPA and CAN-SPAM compliance.

Hassani took on the general counsel role in 2018, assuming sole ownership of the legal function.



MEGAN HAYATI
SVP; Assistant Secretary;
Senior Employment Counsel
Wedbush

Megan Hayati, senior vice president, assistant secretary & employment counsel at Wedbush, is a trusted legal advisor whose expertise, leadership, and strategic judgment have had a meaningful impact on the firm and its employees. With extensive experience in employment law and a deep understanding of the financial services industry, she plays a critical role in helping the organization navigate complex workplace matters, mitigate risk, and support informed business decision-making.

Throughout her career, Hayati has successfully managed challenging employment issues, personnel matters, and legal disputes, often guiding leaders through high-stakes situations that require both legal precision and thoughtful judgment.



ALEXANDRA HILL
Director; Senior Counsel
Match Group

Alex Hill handles complex, high-stakes litigation around the world for a major publicly traded company facing risks in both the US and other jurisdictions where the law is still emerging. Hill is particularly adept at building trust, aligning teams, and breaking down complex problems into practical solutions. He is unfazed by challenging situations, a critical trait in helping the company navigate difficult issues.

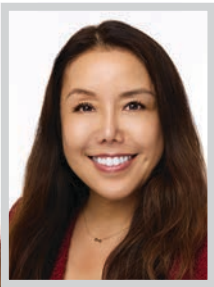
Hill is also deeply committed to public education and volunteers extensively with the local public elementary school. She helps raise much needed funds for initiatives that benefit students, teachers, and families. Last year, those efforts raised more than \$500,000 to fund teacher aides in every classroom and other student resources.



CRISTINA HWANG
Senior Vice President;
Associate General Counsel
Hanmi Bank

Cristina Hwang is senior vice president and associate general counsel at Hanmi Financial Corporation, a publicly traded company, and its wholly owned subsidiary, Hanmi Bank. In this role, she provides legal counsel and support to all of the bank's business units, opining on operational and transactional matters, mergers and acquisitions, as well as new products and services. She also conducts research, drafts policies, and negotiates contracts.

Since joining Hanmi in 2020, Hwang has made valuable contributions to its legal department and the bank, becoming a trusted strategic partner to all business units. For example, she spearheaded a significant revision of the contracts management system.



AYANO "AYA" ICHIDA
Chief Legal Officer; General Counsel;
Corporate Secretary
Aderans America Holdings, Inc.

As chief legal officer, general counsel and corporate secretary of Aderans America Holdings, Aya Ichida leads legal strategy for a multi-brand, \$250 million enterprise, advising on M&A, governance, risk, and commercial transactions. She also directs legal strategy for commercializing Jigami, an FDA-regulated hair-restoration technology backed by more than \$50 million in investment.

Ichida's colleagues value her global perspective and pragmatic, solutions-based counsel. She is known for her warm, collaborative approach, and her colleagues genuinely enjoy working with her. A popular adjunct professor at USC Gould School of Law, Ichida mentors students well into their careers.



DAWN KENNEDY
Deputy General Counsel,
Labor & Employment
University of Southern California

Dawn Kennedy is deputy general counsel for labor and employment at the University of Southern California and the University's lead attorney on labor and employment, overseeing a team of six. She has handled USC's labor and employment work since 2017, advancing from university counsel to associate general counsel to her current role. She advises and represents the University on the full range of workforce issues – employment advice and counsel, labor matters, and employment litigation – with impact across both the University and its health system, Keck Medicine of USC.

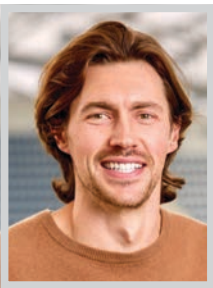
Kennedy's remit covers one of the largest and most complex private employers in Los Angeles, where a single employment issue can carry significant weight.



VIVIAN KIM
EVP; General Counsel; Corporate Secretary; Chief People Officer
Hanmi Bank

Vivian Kim is executive vice president, general counsel, corporate secretary, and chief people officer at Hanmi Bank. Her unique combination of legal expertise, governance leadership, and people management experience has made her a key contributor to the bank's strategic priorities, organizational growth and continued success.

After five years in private practice, she joined Hanmi Bank as corporate counsel in 2015, bringing a strong legal foundation that has since evolved into enterprise-wide leadership at the public company level. Over the last several years, Kim's leadership has been especially impactful. She has helped Hanmi compete in an increasingly competitive talent environment.



LOGAN KUTCHER
Assistant General Counsel
Los Angeles Football Club (LAFC)

As assistant general counsel for Los Angeles Football Club (LAFC), Logan Kutcher supports all legal functions of the Major League Soccer franchise and BMO Stadium, playing a critical role in the club's continued growth. Since joining LAFC, Kutcher has played an integral role in negotiating some of the largest sponsorship agreements in MLS history, as well as countless stadium license agreements supporting BMO Stadium's thriving concert and event business. He also provides legal counsel to LAFC2 of MLS NEXT Pro, LAFC's youth soccer academy and the LAFC Foundation, which serves the greater Los Angeles community.

Kutcher's work ethic, determination and ability to find creative, practical solutions have made him a trusted legal and business partner throughout the organization.



CASSIE MALAYIL
Vice President; Senior Real Estate Counsel; Legal Department Manager
Macerich

Cassie Malayil is vice president and senior real estate counsel at Santa Monica-based Macerich, one of the nation's leading owners, operators and developers of major retail properties in top US markets. As lead in-house attorney for tenant lease negotiations, Malayil plays an essential role at Macerich, which counts signed leases as a critical and quantifiable measure of success. In 2025, Macerich signed 7.1 million square feet of new and renewal leases, which set a new company record.

Among the many thousands of lease negotiations Malayil has successfully led for Macerich throughout her tenure, she helped bring The Cheesecake Factory to regional powerhouse Los Cerritos Center.



SIMONE MILLER
General Counsel
Western University of Health Sciences

As general counsel at Western University of Health Sciences (WesternU), Simone Miller is one of the few African American women in such a role, showcasing her legal acumen and strategic foresight. At WesternU, she built the university's legal department from scratch, implementing a centralized contract management system and improving legal risk management. Miller effectively managed litigation, resolving significant cases, including class action settlements and enhanced governance with tools for conflict-of-interest tracking and legal training.

Beyond her professional commitments, Miller volunteers with animal shelters and practices Ikebana, the Japanese art of floral arrangement, balancing work with personal passions.

SIDLEY

CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE IN CORPORATE COUNSEL

Our 160-year legacy includes more than 45 years in Los Angeles, where Sidley is proud to stand alongside the counsel who lead the city's businesses.

Congratulations to all honorees of the
Los Angeles Business Journal's
2026 Corporate Counsel Awards.

Century City

1999 Avenue of the Stars | 17th Floor | Los Angeles, CA 90067 | +1 310 595 9500

Los Angeles

350 South Grand Avenue | Los Angeles, CA 90071 | +1 213 896 6000

sidley.com

Attorney Advertising - Sidley Austin LLP is a global law firm.
Our addresses and contact information can be found at
www.sidley.com/en/locations/offices. MN-31111



2026 FINALISTS



CHRISTOPHER NORTON
*Chief Legal Officer
World Oil Corp.*

As chief legal officer of World Oil Corp., one of California’s largest privately held companies, Chris Norton oversees all legal affairs at the company and its affiliates and subsidiaries. Over the past nearly six years in this position, Norton has advised World Oil through a multitude of legal challenges including environmental compliance, risk management, human resource matters, and business disputes.

Norton has been leading the massive redevelopment of the Bakersfield Commons, a 20-year project that covers 260 acres of land northeast of Los Angeles. This project has proven particularly challenging due to unforeseen environmental issues and disputes with competing developers.



JIM OLIVA
*Vice President; General Counsel
American Honda Motor Co., Inc.*

Jim Oliva serves as vice president and general counsel at American Honda Motor Co., where he leads the company’s Law Business and Intellectual Property functions across its US operations.

Since joining Honda in 2013, Oliva has progressed through increasingly senior leadership roles, overseeing product liability, class action, intellectual property, warranty, and other complex litigation before assuming responsibility for the company’s entire litigation portfolio. He ultimately went on to lead Honda’s Law and IP organizations. He has also provided strategic counsel to Honda’s executive leadership and business units while coordinating with affiliates globally on US legal issues. Oliva has earned the trust of Honda’s leadership with sound legal judgment.



BILLIE PIERCE
*Vice President; Deputy General Counsel;
Chief Employment Counsel
Prime Healthcare*

Billie Pierce is vice president, deputy general counsel, and chief employment counsel at Prime Healthcare, the nation’s largest physician-founded health system with 51 hospitals and more than 360 outpatient locations in 14 states.

Originally joining Prime as assistant general counsel seven years ago, Pierce rapidly progressed up internal ranks as senior litigation counsel, associate general counsel, chief employment counsel, deputy general counsel, and finally vice president. She now leads Prime’s legal teams on Employment, OSHA, Workers’ Compensation, and Immigration and works closely with all specialty teams within the legal department and Prime’s Executive Leadership.



NIMA RAHIMI
*Chief Legal & People Officer
BuildOps*

Nima Rahimi is chief legal and people officer at BuildOps, the AI-native platform for commercial contractors. He joined the company in 2025 and has taken on a combined legal and people mandate, a structure that reflects how much trust leadership has placed in his judgment across the business.

His focus aligns legal and people with business-strategy — enabling scale, managing risk, and advising the CEO and executive team through rapid growth.

Rahimi’s experience spans M&A, cap table management, debt facility procurement, and liquidity event preparedness. He has managed litigation across commercial disputes, IP, employment, privacy, and regulatory enforcement involving the FTC, CPPA, DOJ, and state attorneys general.



ERICA REILEY-SWANHOLT
*Vice President; General Counsel
Prime Healthcare*

Erica Reiley-Swanholt is the vice president and general counsel for Prime Healthcare, an award-winning health system operating 55 hospitals and more than 360 outpatient locations in 15 states, providing over 3.0 million patient visits annually.

Reiley-Swanholt joined Prime Healthcare’s Legal Department in 2023 with more than 25 years of experience. In transitioning in-house to Prime Healthcare, Reiley-Swanholt has brought a breadth and depth of legal experience accompanied by a practical and pragmatic approach to problem solving that has added tremendous value to Prime Healthcare’s broader strategic initiatives, as well as day-to-day operational issues and challenges.



RHEA RICARD
*Managing Counsel
The Bank of New York Mellon Trust
Company, N.A.*

Rhea Ricard is currently a director and managing counsel at BNY, where she represents BNY’s Corporate Trust division as transaction counsel on securities transactions and defaulted issues. She is an experienced negotiator on such matters, using her deep industry knowledge to find innovative solutions to issues that arise during the course of a deal. She has also organized and led trainings on legal issues in the corporate trust space for her internal clients.

Ricard has also created time-saving templates to streamline contracting with the Bank and efficiently address ad-hoc matters arising in the life cycle of a transaction. Ricard is also the principal legal point of contact for The Bank of New York Mellon Trust Company, N.A., advising on general legal matters.



DAVID RUIZ
*General Counsel; Partner; Chair,
Appellate Law (Strategy, Writs
& Appeals) Team
Manning Kass*

David R. Ruiz is a partner in the Los Angeles office of Manning Kass. He is the leader of the Appellate Law (Strategy, Writs, and Appeals) team and a member of the Special Investigations Unit / Insurance Fraud Litigation team.

Ruiz also serves as general counsel for the firm. Ruiz has been involved in numerous multi-million personal injury cases, where his writing and research skills have proven a key asset to resolving these matters at or before trial. Ruiz is no stranger to high-stakes litigation as, throughout his career, he has participated in a large number of multi-million exposure cases in the areas of personal injury, insurance fraud, employment law, consumer class actions, and real property, as both plaintiff and defense counsel.



IRENE SCHOLL-TATEVOSYAN
*General Counsel
California Institute of the Arts*

Irene Scholl-Tatevosyan was a long-time associate at Nixon Peabody in its Labor & Employment area, and came to become general counsel instead of becoming partner there. In her few years since, at California Institute of the Arts, she has helped organize processes and streamline operations that have significantly reduced risk for the Institute. Additionally, her work has directly resulted in the reduction of legal expenses by many hundreds of thousands of dollars per year.

Scholl-Tatevosyan also serves on the eSports association in LA as well as the national associations of general counsels in higher education. She has provided support for legislation and comment for the Association of Independent California Colleges & Universities.



SANJESH SHARMA
*Assistant General Counsel, Patents
Johnson & Johnson
Surgical Vision, Inc.*

Sanjesh Sharma serves as assistant general counsel, patents at Johnson & Johnson, where she provides strategic intellectual property leadership for high-value, business-critical global patent portfolios. Over more than a decade with Johnson & Johnson Surgical Vision (and its predecessor, Abbott Medical Optics), Sharma has supported the Refractive and Laser Cataract Surgery, Diagnostics, and Digital Healthcare product lines.

Sharma is a trusted strategic advisor whose sound judgment and disciplined execution help protect and advance the company’s innovation assets. She leads and drives patent and trade secret strategies. Recently, she played a critical role in a high-profile intellectual property dispute involving laser cataract surgery technology.



CHRISTINE SON
*Senior Vice President; Legal General
Counsel; Secretary
Dine Brands Global, Inc.*

Christine Son serves as senior vice president, legal, general counsel and secretary of Dine Brands Global, where she oversees legal affairs, risk management, franchise administration, government relations and internal audit for one of the world’s largest full-service restaurant companies. Having spent more than a decade with Dine Brands, she has established herself as a brand-focused attorney with deep knowledge of the restaurant and franchising industries, earning the trust of executive leadership across both the IHOP and Applebee’s brands.

Appointed to her current role in 2021, Son’s responsibilities extend far beyond traditional legal oversight. She serves as a strategic advisor to the business, helping guide a complex franchise system.



akerman

Legal Minds. Business Leaders.

Celebrating the vision and influence of Los Angeles' in-house counsel

They guide critical decisions. They navigate complexity. They protect what matters and help their organizations seize what's next.

In-house counsel are indispensable leaders—bringing legal insight, business acumen, and strategic vision to the table every day.

Akerman is proud to sponsor the 2026 Los Angeles Business Journal Corporate Counsel Awards and celebrate the remarkable professionals whose leadership strengthens their organizations and helps shape the future of Los Angeles.

Congratulations to this year's honorees!

Michael R. Weiss, Office Managing Partner
213 533 5913
michael.weiss@akerman.com

700+ Lawyers and Business Professionals
akerman.com

©2026 Akerman LLP. All rights reserved.



2026 FINALISTS



JASON TAMASHIRO
General Counsel
CIRE Equity

Jason N. Tamashiro currently holds the position of general counsel for CIRE Investment Services, Inc., operating as CIRE Equity, and its affiliated companies. Tamashiro assumes a leadership role overseeing legal transactions, operations, compliance, and risk management teams.

With over two decades of experience in commercial real estate law, both in private practice and as a corporate executive, Tamashiro has been an integral part of CIRE since its inception in 2012. His influence extends to successfully closing transactions exceeding \$1.5 billion, encompassing the acquisition, disposition, financing, and development of diverse real estate assets.



TERI WITTEMAN
Chief Legal Officer; Secretary
Beyond Meat

Teri Witteman is chief legal officer and secretary of Beyond Meat, where she has been since 2019, having built and scaled the in-house legal team. Over more than 25 years, including more than two decades as internal and external general counsel and over ten years as public company corporate secretary, Witteman has built deep expertise in IPO readiness and post-IPO transition, SOX compliance, SEC reporting, corporate governance, and capital markets.

Witteman has a demonstrated track record in executing legal and business strategies, with proven leadership in managing global enterprise risk, litigation, and compliance.



JOHN ZHUANG
Head of Legal
BYD | RIDE

John Zhuang has served as the head of legal at BYD | RIDE and has overseen the growth of the company’s business from a team of 25 to a billion-plus revenue company with nearly a thousand employees across North America. Zhuang overcomes challenges on a daily basis as he has had to wear multiple hats as the company’s business has grown exponentially.

Most recently, Zhuang has worked with the company in overcoming challenges in the advanced manufacturing sector, including rapidly evolving commercial disputes, regulatory changes and trade risks while supporting one of the world’s largest clean air and energy businesses.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE
LOS ANGELES BUSINESS JOURNAL’S
2026
CORPORATE COUNSEL
HONOREES
& FINALISTS

**PAUL
HASTINGS**

It is an honor to partner with forward-thinking leaders like John Zhuang of BYD Motors.

We join the Los Angeles Business Journal in celebrating his outstanding recognition as a Corporate Counsel Awards 2026 finalist, alongside an exceptional group of peers.

Paul Hastings is a leading global law firm with offices throughout the Americas, Asia, Europe and the Middle East.

Paul Hastings LLP | www.paulhastings.com

REGISTER TODAY!



Thinking about selling or transitioning your business in the next 3–5 years?

Learn what you should be doing now to maximize value, avoid costly mistakes and keep more of what you’ve built.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30
8:30-11:30AM | Sheraton Universal Hotel



To register, visit labusinessjournal.com/events/bizreadiness26





Our Purpose is to Feed the Human Spirit™.

Congratulations
on your nomination
John DeFrance.
We celebrate you.





Small Decisions, Big Exposure: A Guide for Corporate Counsel

Insights from some of Greenberg Glusker's leading experts

HIDDEN RISKS OF GREEN MARKETING

By SEDINA L. BANKS, Environmental

Environmental marketing statements can create unexpected litigation exposure. Consumer claims, including threatened class actions, are on the rise. Consumer-friendly states like California provide options to challenge allegedly false or misleading marketing statements, including the Consumers Legal Remedies Act, False Advertising Law, and Unfair Competition Law. One area of vulnerability companies may overlook is environmental marketing claims on product packaging, websites, and social media.

Broad, unqualified environmental benefit claims, such as “eco-friendly,” “green” and “sustainable,” are frequently targeted by consumer plaintiffs as deceptive or misleading. Plaintiffs also scrutinize representations regarding product ingredients and composition. Claims that a product is “all natural,” “non-toxic” or free of certain chemicals or ingredients must be adequately substantiated and not misleading to reasonable consumers.

To minimize litigation risks, companies should carefully review marketing statements before publication, review FTC's Green Guides, as well as applicable federal and state laws and requirements. Legal should work closely with marketing and product teams and conduct periodic compliance audits. Proactive review can help companies avoid costly litigation, reputational harm, and the expense of

revising existing product packaging.

CALIFORNIA'S EXEMPT SALARY THRESHOLD RISES JANUARY 1, 2027

By WENDY E. LANE, Employment

The California Department of Industrial Relations has announced that, effective January 1, 2027, the current minimum wage of \$16.90 is increasing to \$17.40 per hour. The raise also increases the salary-basis test for California's executive, administrative, and professional overtime exemption categories.

For these exemptions to apply, California employers must pay a salary that is at least twice the state minimum wage (in addition to meeting the other duties requirements for those exempt classifications). To remain exempt, salaried employees must receive no less than \$72,384 per year (\$1,392 per week or \$6,032 per month) beginning January 1, 2027. Local minimum wages do not affect the minimum salary threshold for exempt employees, as that is affected solely by the state minimum wage.

If an employee receives less than the minimum exempt salary in any pay period, they automatically become non-exempt during that pay period and they become eligible for overtime pay, even if their job duties fully qualify as executive, administrative, or professional.

Employers should review salaried employees' pay before January 1.

WHOSE FACE IS IN YOUR MARKETING?

By JAMES R. MOLEN, Litigation

Right of publicity claims aren't limited to celebrities.

Any commercial use of a person's name, voice or likeness can create exposure, whether that person is an employee, a customer or the voice talent behind your phone system. And AI is giving companies more ways to use people's identities than ever before.

Here are five steps in-house teams can take now.

1. Separate the photo from the person. A copyright assignment or work-for-hire clause covers the image, but not the likeness of the person in it. Employee, contractor and influencer agreements should address both.

2. Match consent to the use. A release should spell out the media, duration, territory and purpose it covers. For example, if you plan to use a customer's photo in a paid ad, make sure the original consent actually reaches that far.

3. Check before you clone. Before using AI to repurpose an old voice recording, look at what the original agreement granted. New agreements should address digital replicas explicitly, since California's AB 2602 voids vague digital-replica provisions.

4. Run likeness diligence on AI vendors. Find out whether the training data was licensed or scraped, and require warranties on modeled voices and faces, publicity-specific indemnification, state-law compliance, insurance and deletion terms.

5. Draft for the strictest state. There's no federal statute yet and state laws vary, so a national campaign that's lawful in one state may violate the law in another. Consent and release forms should be drafted to comply with the strictest state.

WHAT YOUR EMPLOYEES TYPE INTO AI COULD END UP IN DISCOVERY

By ERIC M. SEFTON, Litigation

Employees across most companies now use AI tools daily, and not always company approved ones. That creates a risk many legal departments haven't addressed. At least one court has held that communications with an AI tool are not protected if they weren't confidential and made at the direction of counsel. And litigants are already asking for AI prompts and outputs in discovery, hoping to find damaging admissions.

Steps to keep employees' AI use from becoming the other side's evidence include:

- **Require company accounts.** Business and enterprise versions of leading AI tools can keep user data out of model training and give IT departments tools to regulate and restrict employee use. Personal accounts often lack these safeguards.

- **Draw clear lines.** An AI use policy should specify what employees may not share with an AI tool, such as legal advice, outside counsel memos and commercially sensitive information. Training helps the policy stick.

- **Bring counsel in early.** When non-lawyers use AI to support a legal matter, contemporaneous documentation that counsel directed the work can help support privilege assertions.

- **Re-evaluate regularly.** AI tools are evolving rapidly, as are the ways that employees use them to support their work. Companies should stay current on these changes so training and policies remain appropriate.

Learn more at greenbergglusker.com.

Helping Drive Growth with Comprehensive Leadership

By HOWARD G. BERGER, M.D.

Strong corporate counsel does more than protect a company from risk. They play an instrumental role in shaping the company's future, enabling smart growth, fostering innovation, and providing the strategic guidance necessary to navigate an increasingly complex business environment.

David J. Katz — RadNet's Executive Vice President, Chief Legal Officer, Corporate Secretary and UK Executive Sponsor — embodies this philosophy impeccably. Since joining RadNet in 2020, David has transformed the legal department into an indispensable business partner that has helped drive the company's extraordinary growth and increasingly global impact.

Six years ago, RadNet's legal department was essentially a one-person operation focused on imaging centers. Today, David leads a diverse, international team of 18 professionals supporting not only RadNet's longtime business — owning and operating the United States' largest network of outpatient imaging centers — but also the company's fast-rising global

leadership in developing AI-powered health informatics.

Building that forward-looking infrastructure while advising a rapidly growing organization requires more than legal expertise. It demands superb business acumen, sound judgment, outstanding adaptability, keen anticipation and unwavering dedication to RadNet's purpose of improving people's well-being through the gateway of imaging. David has demonstrated all these qualities.

During his tenure, he and his team have guided over 100 acquisitions across traditional imaging, advanced technologies, and artificial intelligence. In that same period, RadNet's market capitalization has surged from about \$1 billion to about \$6 billion.

David's judicious leadership is well illustrated by his role in RadNet's expansion into digital health, where AI tools and cloud technology are reshaping the accessibility, efficiency and accuracy of healthcare. These initiatives involve complex contracts, shifting regulations, and international partnerships. David tackles these intricacies by keeping focus on what matters: safeguarding the company without stalling

innovation.

His responsibilities extend well beyond the US. As RadNet's UK Executive Sponsor, David oversees business and legal operations across the company's UK-based entities. He also serves on RadNet's boards in the Netherlands, UK, India, and Australia. Under his leadership, RadNet's legal department now includes more than a dozen practice areas, including corporate governance, securities, compliance, employment law, intellectual property, health-care regulation, and international law.

I am fortunate to consistently witness David's myriad strengths because he is an esteemed member of RadNet's executive leadership team and a trusted advisor to the company's Board of Directors. His ability to evaluate both legal ramifications and overall business strategy makes him an invaluable partner.

As impressive as David's track record is at RadNet, his character shines outside the office as well. For 36 years, he has served as a reserve deputy with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, including 14 years leading the Malibu Search and Rescue Team. He has logged more than 10,000 hours of volunteer

service, routinely stepping into dangerous situations to rescue people in crisis. A two-time recipient of the Sheriff's Department Medal of Valor, David shows up for his community with leadership, calm demeanor, and genuine humility — the same qualities he brings to RadNet.

Before joining RadNet, David spent three decades in private practice, including 20 years as a partner at Ashurst Perkins Coie. Making the jump in-house later in his career was a fresh challenge, and his success shows how much value deep experience brings when paired with an open mind.

David shared with me a guiding principle he learned from a mentor early in his career: “The legal tail shouldn't wag the business dog.” He understands that good corporate counsel doesn't just point out walls — it helps the business figure out how to build the doors.

As RadNet expands into new markets and technologies, David's leadership will continue to be a cornerstone of the company's success.

Howard G. Berger, M.D. is co-founder, chairman, president and chief executive officer of RadNet, Inc. Learn more at radnet.com.



congratulates all of the finalists and recipients of the

Los Angeles Business Journal's 2026 Corporate Counsel Awards

It is a special pleasure for us to celebrate our longtime clients and friends who were selected as finalists. They are exceptional leaders and trusted partners whose judgment, integrity, and dedication inspire us.

Cristina Hwang

Hanmi Bank

Dawn Kennedy

University of Southern California

Vivian Kim

Hanmi Bank

Cassie Malayil

Macerich

Jim Oliva

American Honda Motor Co., Inc.

John Zhuang

BYD Motors

omm.com | 850+ Lawyers

Austin • Beijing • Brussels • Century City • Dallas • Hong Kong • Houston • London • Los Angeles • New York
Newport Beach • San Francisco • Seoul • Shanghai • Silicon Valley • Singapore • Washington, DC



Everywhere Security Matters™

Inter-Con is one of the largest and fastest-growing security and risk management companies in the world. With over 40,000 employees worldwide, we have the scale and technological capabilities of a global enterprise, while maintaining the agility and long-term commitment of a 100% family-owned business.

icsecurity.com