

LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: Labor & Employment Attorneys



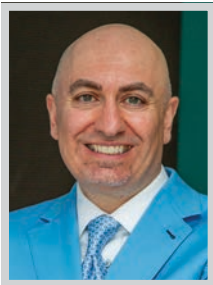
THERE ARE MANY BRILLIANT ATTORNEYS IN LOS ANGELES – MASTERS OF THEIR CRAFT THAT CAN PREPARE individuals and businesses for any legal issue that might arise while expertly providing counsel as needed and writing and overseeing the documents designed to protect their clients’ assets and livelihoods.

When it comes to the intricacies of employment and labor, a whole additional set of skills is required. The leading employment attorneys and experts in the region have their finger on the ever-changing pulse of labor legislation, what changes have come to the labor law landscape in recent times, the new rules of hiring and firing, and the various trends that they have been tirelessly monitoring and managing for their clients.

In this special section we have gathered some of the very best labor and employment attorneys in the region. These are the lawyers you want in your corner in court.

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.

LOI: LABOR & EMPLOYMENT ATTORNEYS



EDWIN AIWAZIAN
Chief Executive Officer
Lawyers for Justice, P.C.

Edwin Aiwazian has built a remarkable legal career defined by results, leadership, and a commitment to ensuring that individuals have the power to stand up to some of the largest corporations in America. As CEO of Lawyers for Justice, P.C., Aiwazian has built a remarkable legal career defined by results, leadership, and a commitment to ensuring that individuals have the power to stand up to some of the largest corporations in America.

Aiwazian leads a nationally expanding law firm representing workers, consumers, and injury victims in complex, high-stakes litigation. Under his leadership, Lawyers for Justice has recovered more than \$1.5 billion for tens of thousands of individuals and handled more than 3,000 class action and complex matters nationwide.



CLIFTON W. ALBRIGHT, JR.
Partner
Albright, Yee & Schmit, APC

Clifton Albright Jr. is a dedicated attorney at Albright, Yee & Schmit, APC (AY&S), where he specializes in general and complex business litigation, with a focus on labor and employment matters.

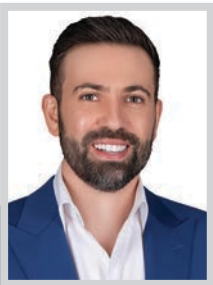
Albright's accolades, though early in his career, are enviable: from the privilege of being part of the Byrne Trial Advocacy Team to his enriching clerkship under the Honorable Carol Rose. A defining moment in his legal career came in 2022, when he took on the challenging responsibility of representing the renowned Tiffany Haddish. Against the backdrop of a high-stakes sex abuse and molestation lawsuit, Albright's expertise was evident as he swiftly led the case to dismissal in just 18 days, ensuring justice while preserving the reputation of his client.



KATHIANA AURELIEN
Counsel
Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP

Kathiana Aurelien is counsel in Willkie's Labor and Employment Group in Los Angeles. She focuses her practice on representing industry-leading clients on a wide range of labor and employment matters. She regularly advises on corporate transactions and has extensive experience working on workplace investigations, evaluating worker classification issues, and implementing reductions-in-force.

Aurelien regularly advises clients on sensitive executive separation matters, compliance issues, and developing, implementing and enforcing personnel policies. She has experience defending state and federal discrimination and retaliation claims; drafting and negotiating employment, severance, and general release agreements; complying with wage payment and sick leave obligations; and drafting effective personnel policies.



JACK BAZERKANIAN
Founding Attorney
C&B Law Group

Jack Bazerkanian has distinguished himself as one of California's leading labor and employment attorneys through his unwavering commitment to protecting employee rights, achieving exceptional results, and advocating for fairness in the workplace. Throughout his career, he has represented employees in complex employment disputes involving wage and hour violations, discrimination, harassment, retaliation, wrongful termination, and whistleblower claims. His work has helped employees recover millions of dollars in compensation while holding employers accountable for unlawful workplace practices.

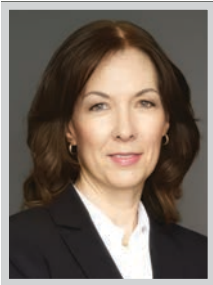
Bazerkanian's outcomes demonstrate his ability to navigate highly complex employment litigation and his dedication to obtaining meaningful results for workers whose rights have been violated.



MICHAEL BRODY
Partner; Senior Trial Attorney
LightGabler LLP

Michael Brody has devoted 20 years to representing businesses in legal disputes involving employment litigation matters. Brody litigates a broad range of employment and business matters in both state and federal court, as well as in administrative proceedings. He represents businesses at all stages of litigation, from the initial claim through trial and in alternative dispute resolution, consistently securing major wins for his clients.

One example of a successful case where Brody was lead counsel was a jury trial in Santa Barbara County Superior Court in which a female employee claimed disability discrimination, wrongful termination and related causes of action against her former employer, a law firm. After two days of deliberation, the jury returned a complete defense verdict on behalf of Brody's client.



JENNIFER WOO BURNS
Principal
Scali Rasmussen, PC

Scali Rasmussen principal Jennifer Burns is a distinguished employment law compliance attorney and a pivotal advisor to California's business leaders and human resources professionals. Navigating one of the nation's most complex regulatory landscapes, Burns is recognized for a "prevention-first" philosophy that transforms intricate legal mandates into actionable business strategies. Her practice is defined by a unique ability to bridge the gap between high-level compliance and operational reality.

What distinguishes Burns is a professional pedigree that includes serving as a Human Resources Manager and in-house counsel for both publicly traded and family-owned enterprises. This "dual-lens" expertise allows her to act as a seamless extension of her clients' leadership teams.



JASON CAMPBELL
Partner; Leader, Los Angeles Office
Labor and Employment Practice
Winston Taylor

Jason Campbell – the leader of Winston & Strawn's Los Angeles Labor and Employment Practice – is a nationally recognized authority in labor and employment law known for his dedication to his work and outstanding client service.

Campbell regularly works with local and national clients on wage and hour class, collective, and representative action defense. He also defends employers against wrongful termination, harassment, discrimination and retaliation claims in trials in state and federal court and in administrative proceedings. Campbell also possesses the ability to adeptly represent clients across a range of vastly different industries including banking and financial services, luxury retail and manufacturing, energy infrastructure, medical devices, consumer goods, steel manufacturing, beauty products, and food and beverage.



AMY CHANG
Executive, Office of the Chief Legal Officer
Creative Artists Agency (CAA)

Amy Chang is a senior employment attorney whose value to an organization goes well beyond traditional legal counsel. Over more than 20 years of practice, she has become the kind of in-house advisor business leaders rely on when decisions are difficult, time-sensitive, and carry both legal and operational consequences.

At Creative Artists Agency (CAA), where she has served in the Office of the General Counsel since 2018, Chang is regularly involved in matters where employment issues intersect with business strategy and reputation. She is known for helping executives work through complicated employee and organizational decisions in a way that allows the business to move forward without unnecessary disruption. Her strength lies in identifying practical paths forward in situations that often have no obvious solution.



JESSE CRIPPS
Partner
Gibson Dunn & Crutcher LLP

Jesse is consistently recognized as a leading employment attorney for his track record of major victories in high-stakes employment actions for employers. He has achieved unique success at both the trial and appellate court levels and is among the few employer-side attorneys to have tried class and representative actions to verdict.

In June 2025, Cripps led the Gibson Dunn team in securing a complete summary judgment victory for Northrop Grumman Corporation in a PAGA-only case initiated by a former employee. In February 2025, Cripps and team secured a complete defense victory for Atlas Assembly, Inc. in a multi-faceted case alleging various wage and hour violations. Cripps and team also secured a complete victory for Northrop Grumman Systems Corporation, prevailing on all three claims brought by a former employee.



TANJA DARROW
Shareholder
Littler

Tanja L. Darrow is a highly accomplished litigation attorney whose career is distinguished by excellence, leadership, and a deep commitment to justice and equity. As co-chair of Littler's Litigation and Trials Practice Group and a core member of the Complex Litigation and PAGA Practice Group, she leads strategy on some of the firm's most high stakes labor and employment matters. Her practice spans wage and hour disputes, discrimination and harassment claims, and compliance with key employment statutes including Title VII, the ADA, and the FMLA.

Darrow is widely regarded for her courtroom strength. She has served as lead counsel in hundreds of cases and has consistently secured complete defense verdicts in every trial she has conducted.

**SHEGERIAN
& ASSOCIATES**

LOS ANGELES BUSINESS JOURNAL

2026 Leaders of Influence: Labor & Employment Attorneys



SHAREHOLDER

Carney R. Shegerian



MANAGING SHAREHOLDER

Mahru Madjidi



SHAREHOLDER

Anthony Nguyen

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EMIL DAVTYAN

Founder; Managing Attorney
D.Law

Emil Davtyan founded D.Law in 2015. Now, his team of 150-plus lawyers and staff have helped hundreds of thousands of California workers recover over \$1.5 billion from their employers. To date, the firm has helped pursue over 6,000 cases.

Davtyan’s ability to be adaptive is a huge factor in his success. In 2020, there was an unprecedented level of employment disruption as a result of the pandemic caused by COVID-19. Davtyan and his team have masterfully maneuvered around the daily changes to ensure workers in need don’t get the “short end of the stick.” Davtyan Law Firm has fielded over 70,000 inquiries for potential cases during the pandemic alone. Davtyan has meticulously cultivated a company culture that re-imagines the modern law firm to provide a welcoming atmosphere.

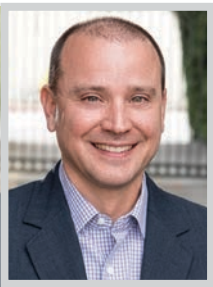


DAMIEN DELANEY

Co-Chair, Wage and Hour Practice
Akerman LLP

In California’s demanding and fast-evolving labor and employment landscape, Damien Delaney stands out as a trusted advisor and formidable advocate for employers confronting their most complex legal challenges. A Los Angeles-based partner and co-chair of Akerman LLP’s national Wage and Hour Practice, DeLaney brings more than 15 years of experience defending employers in high-stakes litigation, with recent accomplishments that underscore his influence, leadership and results-driven approach.

Over the past 12-18 months, DeLaney has served as lead partner on several matters that exemplify his ability to manage novel legal theories, significant financial exposure, and sensitive workplace issues. He led a precedent-setting wage and hour class action involving a novel joint-employer theory and sovereign governmental issues.



DAVID deRUBERTIS

Founder; Lead Trial Lawyer
The deRubertis Law Firm, APC

In the last four years, David deRubertis as lead trial counsel has achieved approximately \$605 million in employment-related jury verdicts on cases where the combined pre-trial offers were just over \$4 million.

In addition to these trial results, deRubertis has continued to handle and resolve numerous eight- and/or multi-seven-figure matters for clients ranging from high-profile celebrities, high-level executives and in-house counsel. Some of his resolutions during the last year and a half include (separate from tried cases): \$13,750,000, a record-setting settlement, in a single-plaintiff employment-related defamation case against the Regents of University of California; \$12,500,000 single-plaintiff employment; \$11.2 million single plaintiff employment; and \$4,450,000 single-plaintiff employment.

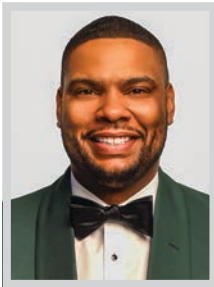


JAMES DeSIMONE

Founder
V. James Desimone Law

Employment and civil rights attorney V. James DeSimone’s work often begins where someone else’s life has just been torn apart. DeSimone has been a powerful leader in the sphere of employment and civil rights law for over 40 years, resolutely utilizing his profound expertise to champion justice in a variety of cases, including those involving employment discrimination and harassment, COVID wrongful death claims, as well as civil rights wrongful death suits related to improper use of force and positional asphyxiation by law enforcement.

DeSimone stands as an exemplary figure in the realm of employment law, a respected beacon who enlightens audiences in national and local news about employment law and civil rights matters, while also shedding light on civil rights issues at esteemed educational institutions and conferences.



RODNEY DIGGS

President; Managing Partner
Ivie McNeill Wyatt Purcell & Diggs

Rodney Diggs became a partner at Ivie, McNeill & Wyatt in 2016 and, in 2019, became a named partner when the firm was renamed Ivie McNeill Wyatt Purcell & Diggs. In December 2025, he was appointed president and managing partner of the firm.

Diggs has obtained more than \$200 million in verdicts and settlements on behalf of his clients. Most recently, he secured a \$27,350,000 jury verdict in a civil rights excessive force case against the County of San Bernardino, the largest verdict in the history of the Riverside Federal Court. This landmark result further solidifies Diggs’ reputation as one of California’s premier civil rights and employment trial attorneys, known for taking complex, high-risk cases against powerful public entities and prevailing before juries.

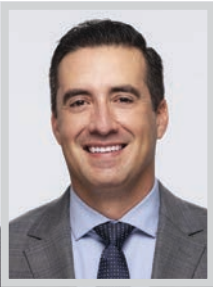


CAROLINE DONELAN

Partner
Blank Rome LLP

Caroline Donelan’s practice is grounded in employment matters that carry significant legal and financial exposure, particularly wage-and-hour class actions and claims brought under the Private Attorneys General Act. She advises domestic and international clients on issues where legal risk directly shapes business decisions and operational strategy.

Donelan’s career is distinguished by early, strategic involvement, with clients turning to her to address workplace issues before they develop into formal disputes or escalate into litigation. This perspective is critical to legal strategy and shapes how organizations respond to and manage risk in real time. Her practice includes matters marked by procedural complexity and meaningful financial exposure. Her initial assessments of employment liabilities often lead to resolutions that limit litigation costs.



ALFONSO ESTRADA

Partner; Co-Section Leader, Statewide Labor & Employment Practice; Founder, Workplace Investigations Practice Group
Hanson Bridgett

When ICE ramped up enforcement across California in 2025, most employers didn’t know what they were legally required to do. Alfonso Estrada, partner at Hanson Bridgett, had clear answers when employers needed it the most. His core message: California employers have more rights than they think, but also more obligations than they realize.

Estrada explained that ICE can walk into a publicly accessible area of a workplace without a warrant. But it cannot enter a locked company office, a secured floor, or a restricted employee area without a judicial warrant or an employee’s consent. Estrada made this guidance accessible and also went to where workers were. He went on-site to conduct trainings and walk employees through their rights in plain terms and in Spanish when needed.

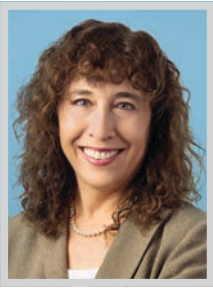


HANSON BRIDGETT NDUBISI (BISI) EZEOLU

Partner
Tucker Ellis

Ndubisi (Bisi) Ezeolu is an experienced litigator who represents and advises businesses, municipalities, and public entities in complex labor and employment matters. Known for his determination and tenacity, Ezeolu serves as Los Angeles partner-in-charge and co-chair of the Labor & Employment Group at Tucker Ellis, overseeing litigation strategy and managing client matters throughout California.

With extensive experience in California law and a strong client-focused approach, Ezeolu counsels clients on proactive strategies to help avoid litigation. He has successfully secured dismissals, favorable summary judgment rulings, and other positive outcomes for numerous Tucker Ellis clients. He serves as a trusted advisor to companies and executives across a broad spectrum of employment law matters.

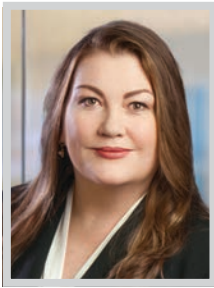


LAURA FARBER

Partner
Hahn & Hahn LLP

Laura Farber has dedicated her legal career to employment and commercial litigation, with a primary focus on counseling clients in employment disputes. A member of both Hahn & Hahn’s litigation and employment departments, she is an accomplished trial lawyer.

Farber was nominated by the American Bar Association’s Nominating Committee, to become the president-elect of the ABA in August of 2026, to then serve as president in August of 2027 through August of 2028. She is the immediate past California State Delegate to the American Bar Association’s House of Delegates, a member of the ABA Day Planning Committee, an advisory member of the Council for the Fund for Justice and Education, a California Lawyers Association Delegate to the House of Delegates, and has been actively involved since 1994.



KATHERINE FORSTER

Partner
Munger, Tolles & Olson LLP

A seasoned practitioner and co-chair of MTO’s Labor and Employment Practice Group, Katherine Forster has litigated over 100 class, collective and representative actions. She has extensive experience helping companies navigate highly sensitive private plaintiff and government agency claims for sexual harassment and abuse, systemic discrimination, whistleblower retaliation and pay equity.

Forster represented BlackBerry and its CEO in a sexual harassment, gender discrimination, retaliation and pay equity lawsuit filed by a former C-level executive. In November 2024, Forster secured dismissal with prejudice of the harassment and pay equity claims at the pleading stage, including all claims against BlackBerry’s CEO. In March 2026, she obtained summary judgment on claims for gender discrimination, negligent retention and retaliation during employment.

LOI: LABOR & EMPLOYMENT ATTORNEYS



PENNY CHEN FOX

Partner
K&L Gates

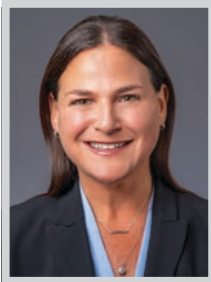
Penny Chen Fox has built an impressive career by becoming a trusted advisor to employers navigating complex and rapidly evolving areas of California employment law. Since joining K&L Gates in 2021 and rising to partner, she has established herself as a leading labor and employment attorney with deep experience in high-stakes wage-and-hour class actions, Private Attorneys General Act (PAGA) matters, and employment compliance counseling. Her practice focuses on helping employers manage risk, resolve disputes efficiently, and implement proactive workplace strategies that prevent litigation before it occurs. Fox has successfully represented employers in individual, class, and representative wage-and-hour actions in state and federal courts.



MARY TESH GLARUM

Partner; Chair of Employment
Law Practice
Doll Amir & Eley LLP

Mary Tesh Glarum is a formidable litigator and strategic advisor whose career exemplifies leadership at the intersection of employment and healthcare law. As the chairperson of Doll Amir’s Employment Law Practice, Glarum serves as a vital architect of organizational stability for her clients. Her practice is defined by a dual mastery of high-stakes advocacy and proactive risk management, ensuring that businesses and non-profit organizations can navigate the complexities of modern labor laws. Glarum is a seasoned trial attorney with a proven record of success in California’s state and federal courts, as well as the Courts of Appeal. Her litigation expertise spans the full spectrum of employment disputes.



MICHELE GOLDSMITH

Shareholder
BDG Law Group

Michele M. Goldsmith, shareholder at BDG Law Group, is a seasoned trial attorney with more than 25 years of experience handling complex labor and employment matters and litigation for public and private entities across California. Known for her collaborative, problem solving approach and success in high-stakes bench and jury trials, she is trusted by clients like the County of Los Angeles and Los Angeles Unified School District to navigate their most sensitive workplace disputes from inception through verdict. Importantly, Goldsmith is respected by the plaintiff’s bar and judicial officers, and is known for her integrity and forthrightness in litigations. For her efforts, Goldsmith has been consistently honored as a Southern California “Super Lawyer” in Labor & Employment since 2010.



SAMANTHA C. GRANT

Partner
Reed Smith LLP

Samantha Grant is a partner in Reed Smith’s Century City office and is a go-to litigator for national and global companies in administrative, arbitration, and trial proceedings. She leverages her analytical and strategic skills to deliver exceptional results in litigation of discrimination, harassment, retaliation, wage and hour, breach of contract, fraud, defamation, trade secret, and unfair competition cases, among others. Grant has extensive experience in many different industries, including the entertainment, aerospace/defense contractor, hospital-ity, health care, and retail industries. Her deep industry knowledge coupled with her awareness of her clients’ businesses make her particularly adept at proactively advising her clients on litigation avoidance strategies and conducting workplace investigations.



AMBER GRAYHORSE

Executive, Office of the Chief Legal Officer
Creative Artists Agency (CAA)

Amber Grayhorse is senior employment attorney and litigator who operates at the center of workplace decision-making for organizations in sports, entertainment and technology. Her role at leading entertainment and sports agency, CAA advises senior leaders through critical workforce challenges that carry legal, operational and reputational implications. Her scope includes employment counseling, workplace investigations, restrictive covenants, contingent workforce issues, global mobility and employment considerations in mergers and acquisitions. She also advises on matters that require coordination across legal, finance, and company leadership. She often plays a central role in aligning stakeholders who may have different objectives but need a unified path forward.

aalrr Atkinson, Andelson
Loya, Ruud & Romo

**AALRR Congratulates
Irma Rodríguez Moisa**
Named a 2026 Leader of Influence:
Labor and Employment Attorney

For more than three decades, Irma Rodríguez Moisa has set the standard for leadership, strategy, and advocacy in labor and employment law.



LOI: LABOR & EMPLOYMENT ATTORNEYS



JOSEPH HADACEK
Associate
Glaser Weil

Joseph D. Hadacek is a senior litigation associate in Glaser Weil’s Employment Practice Group whose combination of trial readiness, strategic counseling skills, and business-minded approach has made him a trusted advisor to employers facing complex workplace challenges. He represents clients in state and federal courts and private arbitration proceedings involving discrimination, harassment, retaliation, wrongful termination, and wage-and-hour disputes across a broad range of industries, including healthcare, technology, entertainment, hospitality, consumer products, and media.

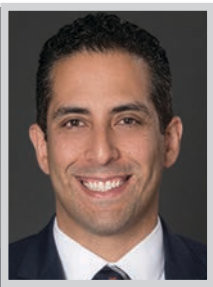
What distinguishes Hadacek is his ability to seamlessly transition between high-stakes litigation and practical day-to-day counseling. In addition to defending employers in contentious disputes, he regularly advises business leaders on emerging employment law developments.



JEFFREY HAMMER
Partner
King & Spalding

Jeffrey Hammer is a partner in the firm’s Business Litigation practice group and a highly accomplished litigator with a strong record of success in complex commercial litigation and pre-dispute resolutions, including significant labor and employment matters. Hammer also regularly negotiates separation agreements on behalf of employers, counsels clients on internal policies regarding employees and contractors, oversees investigations regarding alleged employee and contractor misconduct, and represents employers before the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

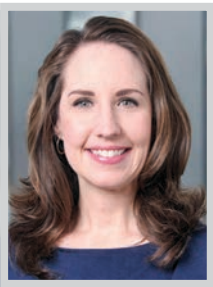
Hammer recently achieved a complete arbitration victory on behalf of a group of former senior executives in a dispute with their former employer, a subsidiary of a Fortune 500 company. The arbitration panel found that the company wrongfully withheld tens of millions of dollars owed to the executives.



STEVE L. HERNÁNDEZ
Of Counsel
DLA Piper

Steve L. Hernández advises clients in a broad range of industries, from representing production companies and studios in the entertainment space to restaurants, concessionaires, warehouses, and hospitality industry, real estate, and trucking companies. He devotes his practice to assisting clients with a variety of labor and employment-related issues, including advising on labor-management relations, on all areas of California employment law, litigating before various state and federal agencies, and litigating individual and class action cases in state and federal courts.

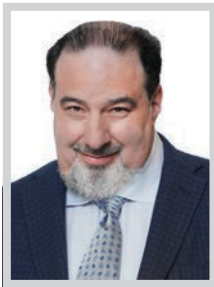
A bilingual child of Mexican immigrants and father of five, Hernández brings an uncommon and valuable perspective to his work. His non-traditional legal career has given him a broad perspective that he uses in guiding his clients.



ESRA HUDSON
Partner; Leader, Employment and Labor
Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, LLP

As leader of Manatt’s Employment and Labor practice, Esra Hudson has established herself as the go-to employment adviser for iconic entertainment companies, national insurance providers, well-known medical centers and leading financial services companies through her deft defense against wage and hour class and collective actions, PAGA representative matters, and trade secret and unfair competition claims.

With extensive experience in crisis management and media relations, including in sensitive matters involving executives and high-profile individuals, Hudson has successfully represented employers in proceedings across a number of forums, as well as in alternative dispute resolution and arbitration, often saving her clients financial and reputational damage in claims, or even avoiding litigation altogether.



KEITH A. JACOBY
Shareholder
Littler

Keith Jacoby is a nationally recognized labor and employment litigator who has built a career handling complex, high-stakes disputes and obtaining exceptional results for employers facing significant legal and business challenges. Known for his strategic judgment, courtroom presence, and ability to navigate novel legal issues, Jacoby is routinely entrusted with matters that carry substantial financial, operational and reputational consequences.

One of Jacoby’s most significant recent accomplishments was his successful defense of the Los Angeles Unified School District’s employee COVID-19 vaccine policy before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit sitting en banc. In a closely watched case with national implications, Jacoby argued before an eleven-judge panel and helped secure an 8-3 decision affirming dismissal of the challenge to the District’s policy.



NICKY JATANA
Los Angeles Office Managing Principal
Jackson Lewis P.C.

As office managing principal of Jackson Lewis P.C.’s Los Angeles office—one of the firm’s largest offices and one of its most prominent California offices—Nicky Jatana leads a high-performing team while maintaining an active practice representing employers in complex, high-stakes employment litigation.

Jatana has built a reputation as a trusted advisor to employers facing significant workplace disputes. Drawing on her in-house and outside counsel experience, she helps clients develop practical, business-focused strategies that minimize disruption while achieving favorable outcomes. Her practice spans complex wage and hour class actions, collective actions, PAGA litigation, discrimination, harassment, wrongful termination and other high-risk employment matters in both state and federal courts.



MICHAEL JAURIGUE
Founder; Senior Trial Attorney
JLG Lawyers

Michael Jaurigue has spent more than 24 years turning a defense attorney’s playbook into a decisive advantage for California employees. Over the course of his career, he has negotiated more than \$800 million in settlements on behalf of workers.

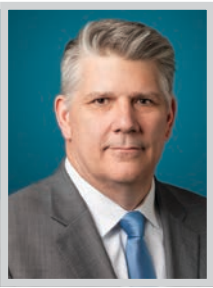
In 2009, Jaurigue founded the Jaurigue Law Group on a single cornerstone belief that is now the firm’s motto: everyone deserves great lawyers who care. He walked away from Fortune 100 work to represent the people those companies most often overlook. Today, JLG focuses exclusively on employees in matters involving wrongful termination, discrimination, harassment, retaliation, and wage and hour violations, serving clients throughout California. He has taken on some of the largest employers in the country, including Amazon and T-Mobile, on behalf of clients.



LAUREN KATUNICH
Partner
Raines Feldman Littrell LLP

Lauren Katunich’s litigation experience includes an extensive record of successfully defending employers and business clients in high-stakes employment, wage-and-hour, discrimination, retaliation, trade secret, and business disputes. She has served as lead trial and arbitration counsel in numerous matters and has repeatedly secured complete defense verdicts, favorable dispositive rulings, and advantageous resolutions for clients across a wide range of industries.

Among Katunich’s trial successes, she obtained a complete defense verdict following a four-week jury trial involving claims against a household employer for racial and national origin harassment, as well as alleged wage-and-hour violations. She also chaired a pregnancy discrimination and wrongful termination jury trial on behalf of a real estate owner and developer, securing a complete defense verdict.



JASON KEARNAGHAN
Partner; Co-Leader, Labor and Employment Practice Group
Sheppard

Jason Kearnaghan is a seasoned trial lawyer and co-leader of Sheppard’s Labor and Employment practice group. He represents employers at every stage of labor and employment litigation, including wrongful termination, discrimination, harassment, retaliation and whistleblower claims. A significant portion of his practice is devoted to defending clients in complex wage and hour class, collective, and representative actions.

Among Kearnaghan’s most notable recent achievements, he secured a complete defense verdict on behalf of a healthcare client in a hard-fought case involving claims of harassment, discrimination, and retaliation—a result that was subsequently affirmed on appeal. He also has a proven track record of obtaining early, favorable outcomes that spare clients the considerable expense and uncertainty of trial.



TRACEY KENNEDY
Partner
Sheppard

Tracey Kennedy is the go-to Los Angeles labor and employment trial attorney in California. For over 30 years, she has represented clients in discrimination, harassment and wrongful termination cases, earning an impressive win record—including three multi-million-dollar wage-and-hour cases.

Kennedy represented the County of Orange in two high-profile and hard-fought jury trials alleging misconduct by District Attorney Todd Spitzer and certain county personnel. The county’s overarching objective across the cases was to reduce financial exposure, control litigation risk and resolve the matters in a way that preserved the county’s ability to operate and defend its interests going forward. Ultimately, Kennedy obtained favorable resolutions for the client by mitigating the uncertainty, cost and operational disruption associated with protracted litigation.

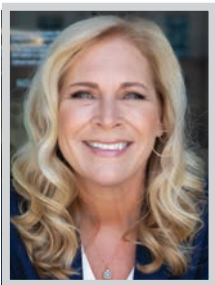
LOI: LABOR & EMPLOYMENT ATTORNEYS



MICHAEL KENT
Founding Partner
KENT | PINCIN

Michael Kent, co-founding partner of KENT | PINCIN, passionately advocates for his clients, digging deep into the facts and evidence of each case, in order to develop the case and position it for the best outcome. Kent believes in advising his clients of all the risks of proceeding to and through trial, verse resolving the matter, in order for the client to make an informed and educated decision on how to proceed.

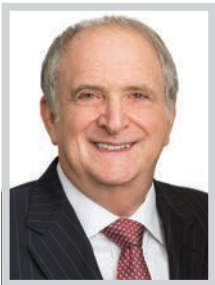
In the past two years, Kent has obtained settlement of \$1.65 million for a County employee who was retaliated against. Kent also obtained a 1.45 million dollar settlement on behalf of a City fire fighter who was wrongfully demoted. Recently, Kent has obtained a number of results including: \$1,000,000 wrongful death; and a \$850,000.00 employment retaliation; among others.



JOLYNN M. KLEIN (FKA SCHARRER)
Shareholder
Hunt Ortmann Nieves Darling Mah Klein & Lozano, Inc.

Jolynn M. Klein is a shareholder at Hunt Ortmann Nieves Darling Mah Klein & Lozano, Inc., and specializes in labor and employment, insurance counseling and litigation, business counseling and litigation, and construction matters. Klein leads the firm's Employment and Insurance practices.

Klein's practice includes the representation of clients in all aspects of labor and employment. Her expertise includes advising employers on employee and workplace issues and best practices, drafting employment documents, independent contractor issues, handling separation issues, providing state mandated sexual harassment prevention training, workplace investigations and other trainings.



HOWARD KNEE
Partner
Blank Rome LLP

Howard Knee's career traces the arc of modern labor and employment law, shaped by decades of precedent-setting work and sustained leadership within the Los Angeles legal community. He is currently a partner at Blank Rome, with more than 50 years of experience and nearly 100 trials spanning jury, bench, administrative and arbitration proceedings.

A defining achievement anchors Knee's professional narrative: his role in *Manhart v. City of Los Angeles*, Department of Water & Power, a landmark United States Supreme Court case addressing gender-based discrimination in the workplace. Notably, Ruth Bader Ginsburg filed an amicus brief supporting Howard's position. The decision remains one of the most influential rulings affecting women's workplace rights.



GREGORY KNOPP
Partner
Proskauer

Over his 25+ year career, Greg Knopp has built a strong track record of successfully defending some of the world's most prominent companies in complex employment litigation across both state and federal courts, in California and beyond. He specializes in class action and Private Attorneys General Act (PAGA) cases and has led some of the nation's most closely watched employment disputes—cases with outcomes that often set important precedents for employers in California and nationwide.

Knopp's deep understanding of employment law spans wage and hour disputes, wrongful termination, discrimination, and harassment cases. His clients include leading retailers, professional sports leagues, financial services firms, technology companies, transportation providers, and healthcare organizations.



DANA KRAVETZ
Firm Managing Partner
Michelman Robinson

Dana A. Kravetz is a widely recognized leader among management-side labor and employment attorneys in LA and beyond. He is the trusted, go-to advisor for many of the country's most prominent hospitality, entertainment, and brand-sensitive employers; clients who turn to him when legal exposure, reputational risk, and operational disruption are all on the line. Kravetz's direct impact on clients is clear: he defends and resolves complex wage-and-hour and PAGA matters, guides employers through high-stakes employment disputes, and helps executive leadership teams make decisive moves with confidence.

Over the past several years, Kravetz has served as lead counsel in significant matters involving nationally watched class actions and sophisticated multi-front litigation.



Claire-Lise
Kutlay

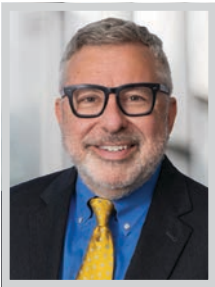
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Leaders of Influence:
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MICHAEL KUN
Partner; Co-Chair, Labor & Employment Practice Group;
Chair, Wage-Hour Practice Group
Thompson Coburn LLP

Michael Kun is one of California’s leading employment litigators, with more than three decades of experience defending employers in high-stakes wage-and-hour class actions, PAGA matters, and single-plaintiff employment litigation. Having litigated more than 200 wage-and-hour class actions nationwide, he is widely recognized for his success in defeating class certification, securing complete defense verdicts, and developing landmark precedent, including the widely cited Serrano joint-employer defense.

With 170 to 180 active lawsuits at any given time, and with 24 cases currently on his trial calendar over the next year, Kun has distinguished himself through a series of high-impact wins for employers facing significant exposure.



CLAIRE-LISE KUTLAY
Counsel
Miller Barondess, LLP

Claire-Lise Kutlay is a leading California public-sector litigator with a strong record of success in high-stakes employment and constitutional law matters involving local governments and senior public officials. She is also routinely retained by companies and high-level executives to serve as lead counsel in complex disputes, handling matters through trial and arbitration. Her experience spans employment law, constitutional litigation, business torts, defamation, fraud, contracts, real estate, partnership disputes, and misappropriation of trade secrets.

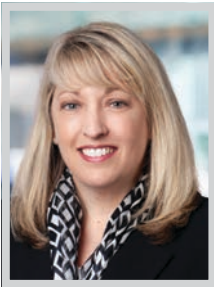
Over the past two years, Kutlay has successfully defended municipalities, counties, elected officials, and senior executives against claims of discrimination, harassment, retaliation, defamation, wrongful termination, and constitutional violations.



KRISTINE E. KWONG
Partner
Musick, Peeler & Garrett LLP

Kristine Kwong 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.

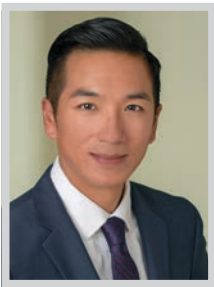
Kwong represents public and private sector entities in retail, manufacturing, finance, health-care, hospitality, real estate, and charitable and tax-exempt organizations, including religious entities, federally qualified health centers, educational institutions, and public sector agencies, municipalities, commissions and special districts in both litigation and transactional matters.



WENDY E. LANE
Chair, Employment Department
Greenberg Glusker LLP

Wendy E. Lane, chair of Greenberg Glusker’s Employment Department, is renowned for her strategic and holistic representation of employers in transactional and operational matters as well as in litigation. Lane has defended employers in court and arbitration cases ranging from complex wage and hour class actions to highly sensitive cases alleging harassment and discrimination. Lane also drafts detailed proprietary information and confidentiality agreements to protect company ownership of employees’ work product and has taken numerous actions to prevent theft of her client’s intellectual property and trade secrets.

Lane’s highly regarded practice focuses on employment counseling and litigation, including high profile clients in the entertainment industry.



TAO LEUNG
Partner; California Employment Practice Head
Hogan Lovells Cadwalader

Tao Leung has developed a strong reputation as a practical, business-oriented employment practitioner. He has obtained favorable resolutions on some of the highest-stakes wage and hour class action litigation and advises global household name companies on the full range of employment issues. Leung has an extensive track record of being at the forefront of employment trends in California and across the United States.

Leung has written and spoken on the implications of the Trump administration’s focus on immigration, evolving stay-or-pay provisions, the recent changes to the Private Attorney General Act (PAGA) in California, AI in the workplace, non-compete agreements, the impact of whistleblowing on employment agreements, and more.

Blank Rome LLP proudly congratulates **Caroline Donelan** and **Howard Knee** on their inclusion in the *Los Angeles Business Journal’s* **Leaders of Influence: Labor & Employment Attorneys**. Their dedication, insight, and impact continue to make a meaningful difference for clients and colleagues alike.

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Howard M. Knee
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JONATHAN LIGHT
Managing Partner
LightGabler LLP

Jonathan Light has over 40 years of experience in the field of employment law. He co-founded LightGabler in 2011. As the managing partner, Light oversees a team of 24 attorneys and a firm that consults with over 6,000 companies throughout California.

Light has successfully tried a range of cases, including jury and court trials, arbitrations and Labor Commission hearings. Case results include the defense of employers accused of wrongful termination, sexual harassment, race discrimination, wage and hour, and other employment-related matters. He has been lead trial counsel on at least 100 class action and PAGA wage and hour cases. He has also appeared on behalf of employers before the federal EEOC and federal Labor Department, the state Civil Rights Department, the National Labor Relations Board, and others.



FERRY EDEN LOPEZ
Partner
K&L Gates

Ferry Eden Lopez has distinguished herself as one of California's premier management-side labor and employment attorneys through a combination of legal skill, practical business judgment, and a steadfast commitment to helping employers proactively manage workplace risk. Since joining K&L Gates as a partner in the firm's Labor, Employment, and Workplace Safety practice, Lopez has continued to build on a career dedicated to defending employers in complex litigation while helping implement strategies that reduce exposure.

Lopez's practice spans some of the most challenging areas of employment law, including class and collective actions, PAGA claims, discrimination and harassment matters, workplace investigations, traditional labor issues, and wage-and-hour litigation.



BRYAN LUTHER, JR.
Partner
Albright, Yee & Schmit, APC

As an accomplished attorney (partner), Bryan Luther, Jr. adeptly navigates the intricate landscape of employment and general litigation, representing a diverse clientele that includes individuals, businesses, corporations, and government entities.

Luther's commitment to his clients goes beyond legal representation; he provides ongoing general and employment counseling, offering invaluable guidance to corporate and government entity clients. Notably, he recently achieved a significant victory by successfully defending a Los Angeles County business against a multimillion-dollar claim, compelling the plaintiffs to withdraw all allegations within a mere three months of filing. His strategic prowess also shone through in the defense of a prominent public figure facing reputation-threatening claims.



MAHRU MADJIDI
Managing Shareholder
Shegerian & Associates

Mahru Madjidi is one of the only attorneys in history to have two nine-figure, single plaintiff employment jury verdicts. As the managing shareholder of Shegerian & Associates – a firm that has recovered more money and won more multi-million dollar verdicts and settlements on behalf of wrongfully terminated employees likely than any other law firm in the country – Madjidi oversees all attorneys and litigation.

Among her most significant accomplishments in the past two years, Madjidi led the appellate team representing the plaintiff in an employment discrimination and retaliation matter against United Airlines. The trial court granted summary judgment in favor of United, dismissing all claims. On appeal, Madjidi successfully argued and secured a reversal.



MARGARET (MAGGIE) MARASCHINO
Partner
Akin

Akin partner Maggie Maraschino is a go-to first-chair litigator for employers confronting their most consequential workplace disputes. Her practice is defined by high-stakes class and collective actions, complex discrimination claims and labor matters where legal strategy carries significant financial, operational and reputational impacts. Known for delivering decisive wins across trial courts, arbitration forums and appellate courts, she is equally valued as a trusted advisor helping some of the nation's leading companies navigate increasingly complex employment landscapes.

What sets Maraschino apart is the breadth and sophistication of her client base and the trust she commands across sectors. She represents some of California's most recognizable employers.

ERVIN COHEN & JESSUP LLP

Congratulations to
Cate Veeneman and Jared Slater
for being recognized as
**Leaders of Influence: Labor &
Employment Attorneys** by
The Los Angeles Business Journal



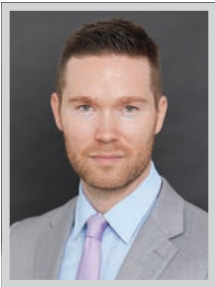
Cate Veeneman
Partner
Employment Department



Jared Slater
Partner
Employment Department



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JORDAN MATTHEWS
Founding Partner
Holtz Matthews LLP

Jordan Matthews, one of the pre-eminent entertainment litigation attorneys in the United States, is a business trial lawyer and litigator with broad experience in the entertainment industry and business sector, specifically focusing his practice on plaintiff sexual assault, harassment and employment matters, as well as high-profile business, and entertainment litigation.

Notably, Matthews served as lead counsel, representing the primary witness from the Wall Street Journal bombshell expose, “Dozens of People Recount Pattern of Sexual Misconduct by Las Vegas Mogul Steve Wynn,” leading to a record \$55 million in fines against Wynn Resorts, and a \$10 million fine against Steve Wynn, banning him from the Las Vegas gaming industry. The Nevada Gaming Control Board also changed its rules governing gaming licensees.



DWAYNE MCKENZIE
Managing Partner
Cox, Castle & Nicholson

Dwayne McKenzie is the managing partner at Cox, Castle & Nicholson. He has developed a diverse practice that meets the needs of various clients in the real estate and construction industries, particularly in traditional labor relations, employment law, ERISA matters, and litigation in both state and federal courts.

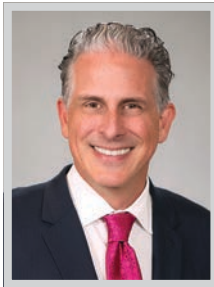
With over 30 years of experience, McKenzie is highly regarded for his extensive knowledge and expertise in all facets of labor and employment law, especially within the real estate, construction, and public works sectors. Clients appreciate his ability to provide legal advice to owners, public agencies, developers, industry and contractor trade associations, and employers in traditional labor relations. McKenzie has been deeply involved in prevailing wage law legislation, interpretation, and litigation.



E. SEAN McLOUGHLIN
Partner
Hill, Farrer & Burrill LLP

With over three decades of high-stakes experience, veteran employment litigator and labor attorney Sean McLoughlin represents management and employers exclusively. He is widely recognized for engineering aggressive, innovative defenses against complex class actions and California PAGA lawsuits. A master of wage-and-hour law and federal FLSA claims, McLoughlin has spent his career developing cutting-edge arbitration strategies. By leveraging nascent developments in case law, he builds maximal arbitration agreements that systematically eliminate expensive collective actions, successfully limiting employer exposure to individual matters.

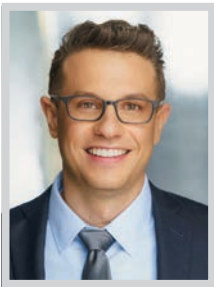
McLoughlin is deeply involved in every phase of litigation, driving cases from initial pre-litigation investigations through trial and appellate victories.



MATTHEW McNICHOLAS
Partner
McNicholas & McNicholas, LLP

Matthew McNicholas is one of California’s most accomplished and formidable advocates for first responders, with more than 90 active cases across the state – many of his cases driving major institutional reforms at agencies like the Los Angeles Fire Department and Los Angeles Police Department. As managing partner of McNicholas & McNicholas and panel counsel to both the Los Angeles Police Protective League and the United Firefighters of Los Angeles City, he has built one of the state’s premier practices focused on public accountability, employment rights, and institutional reform.

Throughout his career, McNicholas has secured more than \$150 million in verdicts and settlements for first responders and public employees while leading some of California’s most consequential mass tort and civil rights matters.



JONATHAN MELMED
Founder
Melmed Law Group P.C.

Jonathan Melmed is the founder of Melmed Law Group and has devoted his legal career exclusively to representing employees in high-stakes labor and employment matters. From the beginning of his practice, Melmed chose to focus solely on employment law, often litigating against employers and defense firms on behalf of workers facing unlawful workplace conduct.

Over the past decade, Melmed has served as lead or co-lead counsel in hundreds of class and representative actions, securing numerous multi-million-dollar recoveries for employees, including several eight-figure settlements involving wage and hour violations, discrimination, harassment, retaliation, wrongful termination, and whistleblower claims. Melmed’s success is driven by a hands-on leadership approach and direct involvement in case strategy and firm operations.

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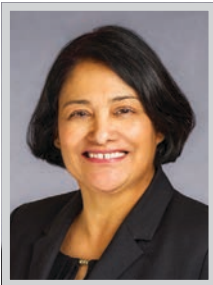
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DEBRA ELLWOOD MEPPEN

Senior Partner; Chair, National Employment Law Practice Group; Chair, National Women’s Initiative 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. 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. Meppen is a strategist and a problem-solver who recognizes that, in the entertainment industry, resolution is often as much about relationships as it is about legal principles.



IRMA RODRÍGUEZ MOISA

Partner Atkinson, Andelson, Loya, Ruud & Romo

One of California’s elite labor & employment attorneys, Irma Rodríguez Moisa is an respected first-chair trial attorney and labor negotiator for municipal governments and private employers across Los Angeles County and the Southland. Her clients seek her advice on their most complex and sensitive labor and employment matters. Clients turn to her repeatedly when facing challenging, high-stakes matters including litigation, separations, and internal disputes because of her smarts and creative problem-solving when faced with knotty issues. Her confidential matters include delicate high-level separations. The dual nature of her practice, her adeptness both persuading juries and negotiating labor contacts make Moisa stand out.



RAFAEL NENDEL-FLORES

Member Clark Hill

As a member at Clark Hill, Rafael Nendel-Flores represents employers in complex employment matters, including wage and hour class actions, employment tax litigation/audits, and appellate litigation. His client base includes professional employer organizations, staffing companies, gig economy companies, manufacturing companies, and transportation companies. He defends employers against discrimination, wrongful termination, harassment, and retaliation claims. He has particular experience with California wage-hour compliance, independent contractor issues, drafting and enforcing arbitration agreements. Nendel-Flores is also one of the region’s leading lawyers in representing companies in complex wage-hour class action/representative actions.



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. She 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 has recently obtained complete arbitration wins for five clients and also obtained a favorable jury verdict after a ten-day jury trial in downtown Los Angeles.



FELTON NEWELL

Managing Partner Newell Law Group PC

Felton T. Newell, co-managing partner at Newell Law Group PC, is an experienced trial attorney. In his more than 25 years of practice, Newell has successfully represented his clients in a range of litigation and employment law matters. Newell has a diversity of practical legal experience that separates him from his peers. Newell has successfully led trial teams in achieving positive results for his clients and also has taken the lead on motion practice that has resulted in the favorable disposition of cases for his client. He has also successfully represented clients in appellate matters. Newell began his professional career as a legislative staff assistant in President Bill Clinton’s White House. In law school, Newell was awarded the Thomas R. Mulroy Prize for excellence in appellate advocacy.



Leading the Way in Labor & Employment

Congratulations to **Ndubisi Ezeolu** on being named a 2026 Leader of Influence: Labor & Employment Attorneys by the *Los Angeles Business Journal*.

Bisi and the Tucker Ellis Labor & Employment team help employers navigate complex workplace challenges—from litigation and investigations to employment counseling and compliance—with strategic, practical solutions.

Tucker Ellis LLP

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Jonathan Fraser Light



Michael H. Brody

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ANTHONY NGUYEN
Shareholder
Shegerian & Associates

Anthony Nguyen is built differently than most plaintiff side trial lawyers. Before joining Shegerian & Associates, he represented Fortune 500 companies in labor and employment disputes and he uses that vantage point every day, anticipating employer strategies before they land.

Two verdicts define Nguyen’s past year. First, a \$1 million jury verdict in a whistleblower retaliation case where a structural engineer, who had been terminated after reporting serious classroom safety violations. The jury found the termination directly tied to his disclosures. Second, a \$4.1 million jury verdict in *Whithorn v. City of West Covina* for a 28 year fire chief terminated after taking medical leave, with testimony at trial revealing city officials and a councilmember conspired to have him fired.



EMILY PINCIN
Founding Partner
Kent | Pincin

Emily Pincin is a founding member and partner at the Redondo Beach based law firm Kent | Pincin. Pincin has dedicated her career to representing individuals who have been wronged or injured. Pincin’s practice is focused primarily on representing employees who have been wrongfully terminated, harassed, discriminated against, or retaliated against by their employer. She also represents individuals who have suffered personal or catastrophic injuries and family members of those who have lost a loved one because of a wrongful death. This commitment to advocating for justice has been the cornerstone of her professional journey.

Through perseverance, resilience, and a steadfast commitment to her principles, Pincin has built a thriving practice known for its dedication to serving the wronged and injured.



RYNE POSEY
Partner
Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP

Ryne Posey is a distinguished employment attorney with a track record of success in high-stakes legal matters across California and beyond. As the head of Skadden’s West Coast labor and employment group, he has been instrumental in leading Skadden’s prominent full-service global labor and employment practice in California.

Companies and executives call upon Posey to handle their most complex and sensitive employment-related matters. Posey leads Skadden teams in litigation and other controversy matters, serving as the lead employment attorney in highly sensitive matters, including representing a prominent technology company based in Silicon Valley in connection with a multi-million dollar breach of contract dispute with a former executive.



DAVID PRAGER
Partner
Nixon Peabody LLP

David Prager is a skilled litigator representing large and mid-sized employers in unfair competition, non-compete, trade secret, discrimination, and harassment cases. He also advises clients on hiring, discipline, termination, accommodations, leave policies, and wage-and-hour compliance.

In the last year alone, Prager has secured a series of significant litigation victories for his clients, including his work as first chair for a 12-day jury trial in downtown Los Angeles involving disability discrimination and retaliation claims, securing a unanimous defense verdict after less than 30 minutes of deliberation. He also obtained a \$1.3 million arbitration award on behalf of a sports agency against its former agent in a case involving allegations of misappropriated funds and breaches of post-employment obligations.



NICK PUJJI
Partner
Dentons

Since joining Dentons in 2016, Nick Pujji has built a high-volume, nationally recognized labor and employment practice, bringing in more than 2,600 clients and opening approximately 3,500 matters.

Pujji serves as lead employment counsel to numerous Fortune 100 companies across a range of industries. He also regularly acts as outside general counsel to technology and entertainment companies, as well as foreign governments, including consulates. Clients rely on him and his team for day-to-day strategic guidance across business and legal functions. His advisory work includes counseling founders, executives, foreign diplomats and investors on business structure, strategy and growth, fundraising, employment matters, personnel issues, partnerships, strategic transactions and risk evaluation.

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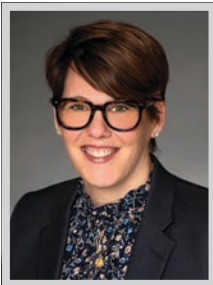
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ANGELA REDDOCK-WRIGHT

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. After working as an employment litigator, workplace, and Title IX investigator for 25 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 discrimination, retaliation, sexual harassment, assault, hazing, bullying, pay equity, PAGA and wage and hour claims.



KATE ROBERTS

Partner
Sidley Austin LLP

Kate Roberts, co-leader of Sidley's Labor, Employment and Immigration practice, has a broad labor and employment practice ranging from wage and hour class actions and PAGA matters to high-stakes executive disputes to the negotiation of complex collective bargaining agreements. She routinely litigates and advises on bet-the-company matters and supports multi-billion-dollar transactions and restructurings. Much of Roberts' success comes from a rare combination: an instinct for what matters most to each client's business and the storytelling skills of a former journalist. She represents the Motion Picture & Television Fund, which provides healthcare and social services to those in the entertainment industry. For more than a decade, she has handled MPTF's employment litigation and counseling.



STEPHANIE ROESER

Partner
Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, LLP

As a partner in Manatt's Employment and Labor practice, Stephanie Roeser counsels high-profile individuals and corporate clients in the entertainment, technology, health care, start-up, and financial services sectors on all aspects of employment law and related litigation. Roeser partners with clients to navigate sensitive employment issues, including crisis management, internal investigations, personnel management and terminations, how to scale—from 10 to 100 to 1,000 or more employees—and other operational issues in a way that mitigates the risk of costly employment litigation down the road. Roeser is an accomplished litigator. She represents clients in all aspects of employment and labor matters before state and federal courts as well as government agencies and arbitration tribunals.



MELANIE RONEN

Partner; Chair, Employment Practice
Stradley Ronon Stevens
& Young, LLP

As partner and chair of Stradley Ronon's Employment Practice and a driving force behind the firm's West Coast expansion, Melanie Ronen exemplifies inspirational leadership in both the legal profession and her broader California community. She is recognized for her strategic vision, her dedication to mentoring the next generation of attorneys, and her profound community engagement—qualities that have established her as a trusted leader within the firm and a respected advisor. Over the past two years, Ronen has led high-stakes litigation for public and private sector clients across California, delivering strong results in wage and hour disputes, discrimination claims and class actions. She has successfully defended complex wage-and-hour, discrimination and class action matters.



EUGENE RYU

Partner; Litigation Practice Area Leader
K&L Gates

Eugene Ryu's career has been defined by a rare combination of legal excellence, strategic leadership, and a commitment to helping employers navigate increasingly complex workplace challenges. With more than two decades of experience representing management, Ryu has built a reputation as a trusted advisor who not only resolves disputes when they arise, but also helps clients avoid litigation through proactive counseling, risk management, and practical business solutions. Ryu plays a significant leadership role in shaping strategy for one of the firm's largest practices while continuing to advise clients across a broad range of industries. His practice spans high-stakes wage and hour class actions, PAGA claims, discrimination and harassment matters and emerging workplace challenges.



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Lauren Katunich
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MICHAEL J. JAURIGUE

Named a 2026 Leader of Influence
Labor and Employment Attorneys
Los Angeles Business Journal



Michael is Founder and Lead Trial Attorney at JLG Lawyers.
Giving employees a voice in wrongful termination, discrimination, harassment, retaliation, and wage and hour cases.

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SONIA SALINAS
Partner
Hanson Bridgett

California has the most complex employment laws in the country and one of the largest Spanish-speaking workforces. For employers, that combination is a huge legal risk. Workers don't understand the rules, investigations miss the full picture, and liability compounds. For most of those workers and for the numerous Spanish-speaking only companies, sophisticated legal counsel has never been within reach. Sonia Salinas is closing that gap.

Salinas, a partner at Hanson Bridgett, has spent the past year building out a much needed initiative. A comprehensive internal investigations training program and a harassment prevention training program, offered in both English and Spanish. The internal investigations training program helps employers train their workforce to conduct investigations.



CHRISTIAN SCALI
Founder; Managing Shareholder
Scali Rasmussen, PC

Christian Scali maintains a broad legal practice that spans strategic counseling and high-stakes, complex litigation. While he represents clients across multiple sectors, his primary focus is on the retail automotive industry. Scali is widely recognized across California for his advocacy on behalf of this sector, particularly for his role in a series of landmark advertising lawsuits brought under California's Unfair Competition Law.

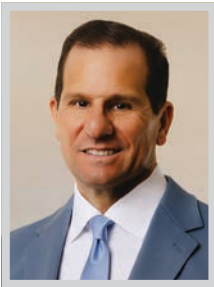
In addition to litigation, Scali frequently guides clients through mergers and acquisitions. Though he is a tenacious litigator, in transactional matters—particularly dealership buy/sell agreements—his goal is always to facilitate a successful deal. His extensive background in litigating disputes related to commercial leases and buy/sell agreements gives him a practical edge in transactional negotiations.



TODD SCHERWIN
Regional Managing Partner
Fisher Phillips LLP

Todd Scherwin is one of California's premier labor and employment attorneys and a powerful, effective advocate for business clients facing thorny employment issues and perilous lawsuits. Over the years, Scherwin has helped employers navigate California's ever-changing workplace laws and increased risk of litigation. He has built a career on courtroom victories, landmark advocacy, and extraordinary firm-building.

Landmark advocacy and a winning track record: Scherwin has built a record of victories for employers, including sitting at the counsel table before the U.S. Supreme Court. He has been instrumental in Fisher Phillips' explosive growth – expanding the office from five to more than 75 attorneys, making it one of Fisher Phillips' fastest-growing offices.



CARNEY SHEGERIAN
Founder
Shegerian & Associates

Carney Shegerian opened Shegerian & Associates in 1996 with a singular focus: representing employees against the largest corporations in the country. In the three decades since, he has personally tried more than 100 jury trials to verdict and has secured more than 50 seven-figure verdicts on behalf of California workers. His career recoveries for clients exceed \$1 billion.

What sets Shegerian apart, however, is consistency. He goes to trial. In a profession increasingly defined by settlement, mediation and risk-aversion, he has tried more FEHA cases to verdict than virtually any plaintiff-side attorney in California, and he has done so against the country's largest defense firms. His success rate on those trials exceeds 98 percent.



LARA SHORTZ
Los Angeles Office Managing Partner
Michelman Robinson

Lara Shortz has built one of Southern California's most respected management-side labor and employment practices while emerging as one of the profession's most influential leaders. As Los Angeles office managing partner of Michelman Robinson, she advises employers through workplace challenges while helping shape the culture, talent, and strategic direction of the firm's flagship office.

Clients turn to Shortz because she understands that today's employment challenges are rarely just legal problems. Executive transitions, workforce restructurings, discrimination claims, wage-and-hour litigation, workplace investigations, executive compensation, and WARN Act compliance all carry significant operational, financial, and reputational implications.

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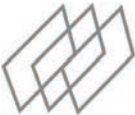
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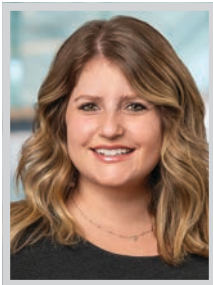
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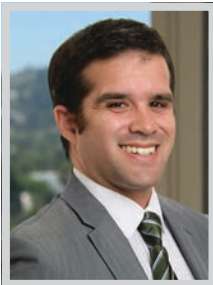


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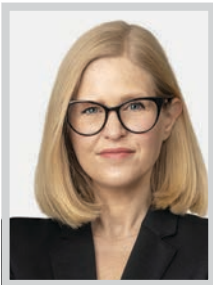
ERIKA SILVERMAN
Partner
Hill, Farrer & Burrill LLP

Erika A. Silverman is a distinguished employment attorney recognized for her strategic insight, tenacious advocacy, and deep commitment to helping employers navigate complex workplace challenges. As a partner at Hill Farrer, she represents companies of all sizes across industries including healthcare, telecommunications and hospitality, defending against wrongful termination, discrimination, retaliation, harassment, and wage-and-hour claims. Equally valued for her proactive counsel, Silverman guides clients in crafting policies, addressing employee concerns, negotiating severance agreements, and ensuring compliance with California and federal employment laws. Silverman’s litigation experience spans arbitration, federal and state trial courts, and appellate proceedings.



JARED SLATER
Partner
Ervin Cohen & Jessup LLP

Jared W. Slater is a partner in the Litigation and Employment Departments at ECJ, where he brings a sharp, results-driven approach to complex defense litigation. His practice primarily focuses on defending employers against a wide range of labor and employment actions, navigating individual and class action claims involving wage and hour violations, harassment and discrimination. In addition to his employment defense work, Slater devotes a significant portion of his practice to professional liability, defending professionals against claims brought by former clients. A seasoned litigator, Slater possesses substantial courtroom experience across legal malpractice, employment, and personal injury actions. Prior to joining ECJ, he established a track record of securing complete defense verdicts.



KATHERINE SMITH
Partner; Co-Chair, Labor and Employment Practice Group
Gibson Dunn & Crutcher LLP

Katherine Smith is the leader of the firm’s DEI Task Force, and a partner in its Los Angeles office, has extensive experience representing employers in individual, representative, and class action litigation at both the trial court and appellate level. In addition to litigation, Smith dedicates a significant portion of her practice to advice and counseling, as well as internal investigations. Smith and Gibson Dunn secured a major victory for Ford when the court declined to interpret and enforce a labor arbitration decision against Ford and instead ordered the matter to arbitration. Ford moved to compel arbitration, with Smith presenting oral argument on March 4. The Court agreed that any interpretation of the decision and factual questions were best left to an arbitrator.



LAURA SMOLOWE
Partner
Akin

Laura Smolowe’s career is marked by a series of standout accomplishments that reflect both her legal acumen and her leadership in high-stakes litigation. As a first-chair litigator and trial lawyer, she has successfully led complex commercial and employment-related cases for Fortune 500 companies across multiple industries, including finance, technology, insurance brokerage, healthcare and entertainment. Smolowe distinguishes herself as a trusted strategist in the most high-stakes disputes. Leading corporate and fund clients have turned to her for their most sensitive and complex challenges. Her commercial litigation practice is anchored by a special concentration on trade secrets and employee mobility, areas where her insight and precision consistently deliver results.

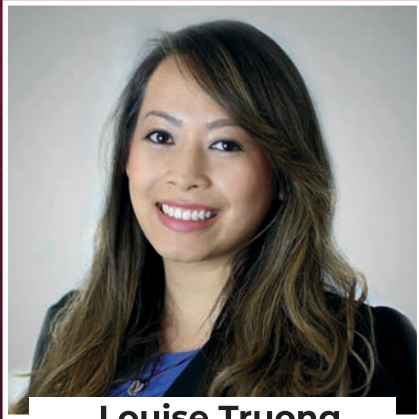


JUAN TORRES
Partner
Musick, Peeler & Garrett LLP

Juan A. Torres is a highly respected partner in Musick Peeler’s Los Angeles office, bringing more than three decades of experience in commercial, employment, construction, real estate, and insurance litigation. Since joining the firm in 1990, he has represented business owners in federal and state courts, arbitration, mediation, and bankruptcy proceedings across Southern California. As a native Spanish speaker, Torres has earned deep trust within the growing Latino business community. A significant focus of Torres’ practice is counseling employers and resolving employment-related claims, including wrongful termination, wage and hour disputes, discrimination and harassment allegations, and government investigations.



We congratulate MSK partner,
LOUISE TRUONG
and all the honorees, for being named among the
**2026 Leaders of Influence:
Labor & Employment Attorneys**
by the *Los Angeles Business Journal*



Louise Truong
Partner, Los Angeles

GRSM PROUDLY CONGRATULATES
Debra Ellwood Meppen
on her selection to *Los Angeles Business Journal’s*
**2026 Leaders of Influence:
Labor & Employment Attorneys**

This recognition is a testament to her decades of legal excellence, commitment to mentorship, and the confidence she inspires in clients and colleagues alike.

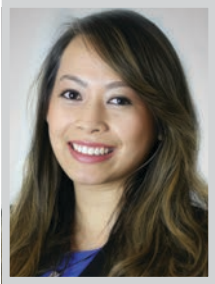


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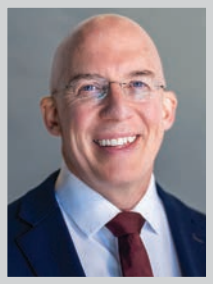
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LOUISE TRUONG
Partner
Mitchell Silberberg & Knupp LLP

Louise Truong, a partner in Mitchell Silberberg & Knupp’s Labor & Employment Department, has become a go-to employment lawyer for some of the biggest names and brands in Hollywood, representing virtually every major player in the media and entertainment industry, securing favorable resolutions in high-profile, contentious litigation. Her practice draws on that same rigor across a wide range of industries beyond entertainment, including consumer products and aerospace and defense contractors, navigating distinct regulatory and security-driven compliance.

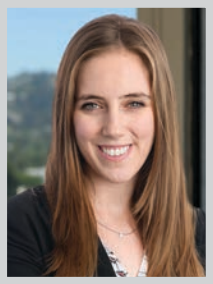
One of her latest significant wins was a complete defense verdict for five defendants following a highly litigated arbitration involving seventeen employment-related claims. Beyond the courtroom, Truong is a trusted advisor to employers on risk mitigation.



MATTHEW UMHOFFER
Partner
Umhofer, Mitchell & King LLP

Matthew Umhofer currently represents a case involving Efrat (“Efty”) Sharony, the former ombudsperson for California’s Office of Youth and Community Restoration (OYCR), who alleges she was fired in retaliation for exposing severe conditions in Los Angeles County juvenile halls.

Shortly after she raised concerns, an 18-year-old detained at the facility died from a drug overdose, and state regulators ordered the hall closed. Sharony claims state officials then instructed her to stop investigating juvenile halls and terminated her employment three months later. Umhofer and Sharony contend that California officials were more interested in protecting the state’s public narrative about juvenile justice reform than addressing documented problems.



CATHERINE A. VEENEMAN
Partner
Ervin Jessup Cohen LLP

Cate Veeneman is a partner in the Litigation Department at Ervin Jessup Cohen. She is a dedicated advocate for California employers, known for her ability to navigate complex litigation while maintaining a sharp focus on minimizing institutional risk. Representing a diverse range of small and medium-sized enterprises across the hospitality, retail, media, and construction sectors, Veeneman defends clients against the full spectrum of employment claims—from individual discrimination and wrongful termination to high-stakes wage and hour disputes. Her expertise extends to the defense of complex class action and PAGA claims, where she consistently secures favorable outcomes.

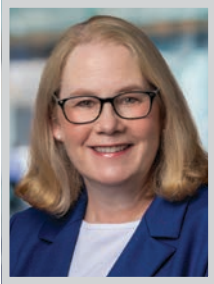
Veeneman’s practice is rooted in the philosophy that effective advocacy requires a tailored, client-centered strategy.



EMILY VICENTE
Partner
Hunton Andrews Kurth LLP

Emily Vicente is co-chair of Hunton Andrews Kurth’s national labor and employment team. Vicente has defended some of the largest Fortune 100 companies in high-stakes employment litigation and is one of a few lawyers to take hybrid class and collective action cases to jury trial. She has helped clients navigate sexual harassment claims fraught with legal and public relations challenges in the #metoo era, as well as equal pay challenges, and implementation of AI in the workplace.

Vicente represents clients in California and nationwide in complex employment and wage-hour litigation. Most recently, she represented an entertainment operations company, a publicly traded beverage manufacturer, a technology manufacturer, and a transportation company in multiple California state and federal lawsuits.



LISA VON ESCHEN
Partner
Greenberg Glusker LLP

In her more than three decades of practicing law, Lisa Von Eschen has earned an impeccable reputation for counseling and defending businesses and non-profit organizations in state and federal employment law matters. As partner at Greenberg Glusker, she advises management on day-to-day compliance issues, including leaves of absence, accommodations, exempt classifications, discipline, terminations, and reductions in force.

Von Eschen also handles executive employment contracts, commission and bonus plans, restrictive covenants, trade secret and confidentiality issues, and severance agreements. She regularly drafts and audits personnel policies and handbooks, leads internal investigations, and conducts preventive training on harassment and other employment topics.

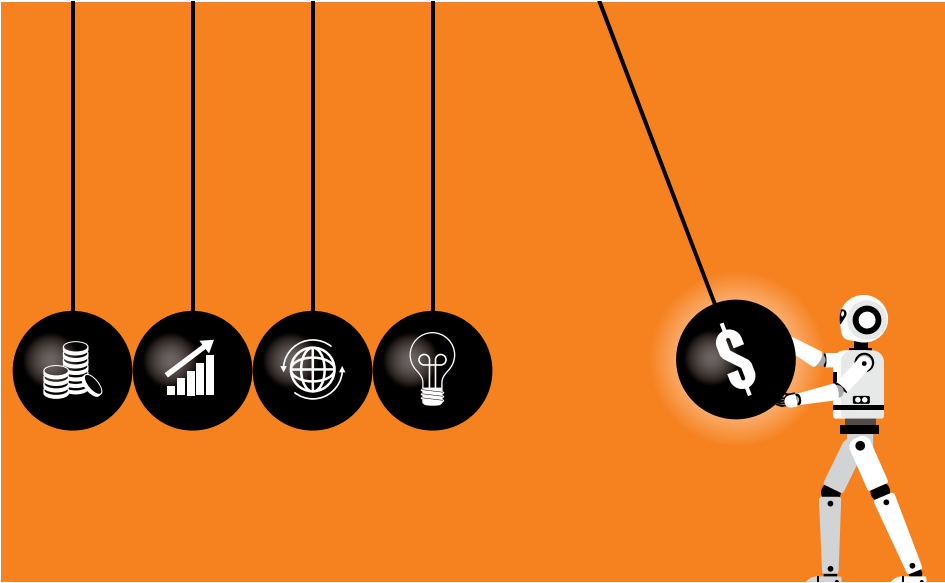
California Becomes First State to Monitor and Track AI Impacts

Recently announced was the launch of California’s first-in-the-nation tool to proactively track AI-related job loss trends – an early warning system to help the state monitor, track, and anticipate job loss. The dashboard was developed in partnership with the University of California, California Policy Lab and released as part of the Governor’s recent executive order issued to prepare workers, small businesses, and communities for the economic disruption that artificial intelligence will bring.

“California has always been a place that embraces innovation while taking seriously the responsibility that comes with it,” said Governor Gavin Newsom. “We’re shaping the future — and charting the course for the nation. As AI advances, we aren’t just watching from the sidelines; we’re reimagining how we prepare California through strong governance and innovative policy.”

The new “California AI-Unemployment Tracker” is a publicly available dashboard developed in partnership between the researchers at the California Policy Lab’s UCLA site and the California Employment Development Department. The tool is designed not only to inform policymakers but also to help Californians better understand how AI is intersecting with the workforce and the broader job market.

“The AIUnemployment Tracker provides us with a clearer picture of how AI is affecting working people and jobs, and where we need to focus support and training. By grounding our decisions in data, we can respond early



and strengthen pathways into good jobs to ensure California’s workforce is able to adapt and thrive as technology evolves,” said Stewart Knox, Secretary of the Labor & Workforce Development Agency.

“AI is advancing quickly, and workers’ concerns about what that could mean for their jobs are real,” said co-author Till von Wachter, professor of economics at UCLA and faculty director of the California Policy Lab’s UCLA site. “This new tracker helps replace speculation with evidence, giving us a clearer under-

standing of what’s changing and how to best support affected workers.”

The tracker, which will be updated monthly, provides early indicators of possible AI-related job displacement, allowing the state to proactively identify where interventions — such as jobsearch support, retraining and upskilling opportunities, healthcoverage guidance, and other essential resources may be needed most.

“The California AI unemployment tracker is a great tool for identifying the impacts and opportunities coming from rapidly develop-

ing technology,” said EDD Director Nancy Farias. “It will give us valuable insight into workforce trends so we can better connect Californians with the resources, training, and support they need to succeed.”

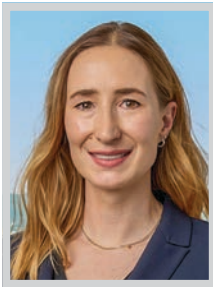
Paired with the tracker is a comprehensive analysis of the data, which at this time shows no evidence of rising statewide unemployment claims in AI-exposed occupations.

However, the data does demonstrate impacts to workers in high-exposure AI positions following the expansion of AI software available to the public. For example, claims from college-educated workers in occupations with high AI exposure increased after ChatGPT-3.5’s release in 2022, and workers in occupations with high potential AI exposure in the San Francisco Bay Area also experienced a sustained increase. The data did not show large disproportionate increases by race, ethnicity, gender, or age, in the number of high-AI-exposure UI claimants.

“Right now, we are not seeing evidence of large-scale AI-related layoffs in California’s labor market,” said co-author Dr. Ben Hyman, senior researcher at the California Policy Lab. “But we do see patterns in certain regions like the Bay Area, in certain tech-heavy sectors, and among highly AI-exposed workers with college degrees. It will be important to continue monitoring trends for those workers, as well as others, so that policymakers can respond appropriately.”

Learn more at gov.ca.gov.

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SONIA VUCETIC
Associate
Glaser Weil

Sonia Vucetic is a senior litigation associate in Glaser Weil’s Employment Practice whose judgment, advocacy skills, and strategic approach have made her a trusted advisor on some of the firm’s most significant employment matters. She represents employers, executives, and other stakeholders in complex workplace disputes, including wage and hour class and PAGA actions, discrimination and harassment claims, retaliation and wrongful termination matters, workplace investigations, and employment counseling.

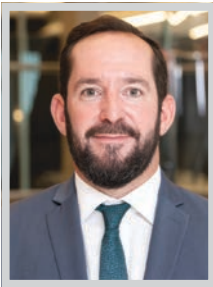
What distinguishes Vucetic is her ability to take ownership of high-stakes matters from inception through resolution. She develops litigation strategy, leads discovery and fact investigations, drafts and argues substantive motions, and works closely with clients to identify practical solutions.



JOSHUA WHITE
Founding Attorney; Chief Executive Officer
Laurel Employment Law, APC

Joshua White’s role at Laurel Employment Law is first and foremost that of a builder. Since founding the firm in March 2024, he has grown Laurel into one of the most dynamic plaintiff-side employment practices in the country — 25 attorneys, over 1,800 clients, and a remote-first culture that has been recognized among the best in the industry — all within the firm’s first two years of operation.

White built a firm where technology, culture, and legal excellence reinforce one another, and where clients get the kind of sophisticated advocacy that was previously reserved for clients of much larger, more established practices. His personal contribution to the firm’s legal work draws heavily on a decade of experience as a general counsel.



IAN WRIGHT
Partner
Alston & Bird, LLP

Ian Wright, a Los Angeles-based partner in Alston & Bird’s Labor & Employment group, is a highly regarded attorney who represents employers in federal and state courts throughout California and across the country in complex employment and commercial litigation. Over the course of his 16-year legal career in Los Angeles, Wright has earned a reputation as a trusted advisor and formidable advocate in high-stakes employment matters, including trade secret and employee mobility disputes and discrimination, harassment, retaliation, wrongful termination, defamation, and wage and hour claims.

Wright also has considerable experience litigating cases that arise when employees leave to work for a competitor, misappropriate the proprietary information of their former employers, or engage in other forms of unfair competition.



JASON YU
Partner
Snell & Wilmer

Jason Yu is a labor and employment and litigation, investigations, and Practice Group leader and trials partner in Snell & Wilmer’s Los Angeles office, where he has built a distinguished career in labor and employment law, commercial litigation, and complex business disputes. He has represented clients ranging from major manufacturers and financial institutions to technology and logistics companies in high-stakes matters involving employment liability, trade secret misappropriation, and intellectual property litigation.

Yu’s deep trial experience and strategic approach have made him a trusted advisor to domestic and international clients, particularly US subsidiaries of Asia-based companies navigating complex US legal landscapes. Yu’s success stems from his ability to develop cost-effective litigation strategies.



DEBBIE BIRNDORF ZIELER
Partner
Norton Rose Fulbright

After more than 20 successful years as founder and managing partner of Birndorf Law Offices, an employment counselling and litigation boutique representing California employers and executives, Debbie Birndorf Zieler joined Norton Rose Fulbright’s Los Angeles office in 2023, where she now leads the firm’s California labor and employment practice. In this role, she is responsible for driving the strategic direction and growth of the practice statewide, expanding the firm’s footprint and strengthening its capabilities in a highly competitive market.

Under Zieler’s leadership, the team has achieved significant success representing large employers in high-stakes wage and hour class actions and PAGA matters, delivering strong results in some of the most complex and fast-evolving areas of California employment law.

Board and CBE Approve Options for 2028 Bar Exam

At its joint meeting earlier this year, the Board of Trustees and the Committee of Bar Examiners (CBE) voted to explore a plan that could have the State Bar, beginning in 2028, administer the National Conference of Bar Examiners’ NextGen Uniform Bar Examination (NextGen UBE), without a California-specific component. The Board also approved the possibility of a return to using questions developed by Kaplan Exam Services. The CBE’s and Board’s actions do not limit the final recommendation that they may make to the California Supreme Court based on their final review and evaluation of the many competing interests.

The deliberations to make a recommendation to the Supreme Court were prompted by challenges and criticisms surrounding the February 2025 California Bar Examination. Friday’s decisions also underscore the need to transition away from the Multistate Bar Examination (MBE), which will be phased out as a standalone option by July 2028.

The Trustees and committee members have discussed future exam possibilities in multiple meetings since August 2025. Given the current 18-month to two-year notice requirements prior to moving to a different exam or vendor, they must finalize their recommendation to the Supreme Court with sufficient time for the Court to make its decision in July.

Joint statement from Board chair José Cisneros and CBE chair Alan Yochelson:

“The Board of Trustees and the Committee of Bar Examiners are committed to delivering a bar exam that is fair, accessible, reliable, and responsive to the evolving needs of those who take it. Today, we took an important step toward shaping an informed recommendation

for the California Supreme Court. Our work will continue over the next several months and years to ensure that any changes create a better experience for all applicants, strengthen public trust, and uphold the integrity of the

been received.

For the law schools survey, deans of ABA-approved law schools expressed a strong preference for adopting the NextGen UBE without a California-specific component. They

openness to NextGen UBE. All groups stressed the importance of long-term continuity.

The Board and CBE have been evaluating multiple options for 2028 and beyond. These include:

- Staying the course and developing a new California exam consistent with the Supreme Court’s October 2024 directive, using questions developed by Kaplan Exam Services until the new exam can be developed. Alternatively, a bridge to the new exam could be adoption of the NextGen UBE.
- Using the NextGen UBE with or without a California-specific component.
- Creating a streamlined California exam similar to Nevada’s model, limited to multiple-choice questions and performance tests, with variants such as an online module to assess skills difficult to measure in traditional formats.

The Board and CBE also approved business requirements and an evaluation rubric for assessing and, ultimately, selecting a vendor to administer the California Bar Examination starting in 2027. These standards define expectations for software providers, including technical capabilities, security, candidate experience, and implementation. The rubric sets scoring criteria to ensure transparency and consistency in evaluating proposals. This action follows work by the CBE’s Subcommittee on Exam Administration, which refined the requirements and rubric to guide the upcoming request for proposals later this year, after the current ExamSoft contract ends following the July 2026 exams.

Learn more at calbar.ca.gov.

‘The Board of Trustees and the Committee of Bar Examiners are committed to delivering a bar exam that is fair, accessible, reliable, and responsive to the evolving needs of those who take it. Today, we took an important step toward shaping an informed recommendation for the California Supreme Court.’

JOSE CISNEROS, Board of Trustees
ALAN YOCHELSON, CBE

profession.”

At the January meeting, the Board and CBE participated in an informative discussion with law school deans, as well as with Kaplan Exam Services representatives, on their efforts to produce multiple-choice, performance test, and essay questions.

The State Bar sent surveys on future exam option preferences to California law school deans in November 2025 and to the Board and the CBE on December 6, 2025. A similar survey was sent to current licensees, current and prospective applicants who registered with the State Bar in the last five years, California bar associations and attorney organizations, and disability rights organizations on January 5, 2026. More than 13,700 survey responses have

cited NCBE’s investment in question development, validation, and pretesting, as well as benefits such as score portability, a national preparation network, and professionally developed resources.

California-accredited law schools most frequently ranked adoption of the NextGen UBE with a California-specific component as their preferred option but acknowledged trade-offs and expressed support for adopting NextGen without a California component or having the California component be a lower-stakes online assessment to ensure familiarity with California law.

California unaccredited law schools initially favored a streamlined exam modeled on Nevada’s approach but indicated significant