

# Meet the Judges:



## Jason Anderson - Shareholder, *Stradling Yocca Carlson & Rauth*

Jason Anderson represents business owners and managers of closely held businesses in disputes over ownership, management and control, and the future direction of the businesses. Ironically, these disputes typically arise due to his clients' success as owners and managers. Anderson has successfully litigated these issues in courts in California and Delaware, and in private arbitration. Outside the court room, Anderson employs an aggressive, strategic and practical approach to negotiating a separation of business owners' interests when resolving these sometimes highly contentious disputes, commonly referred to as a business divorce. Anderson views his best outcomes as those that save businesses money and reputational damage in order to ensure long-term growth and success.



## Colin Davis - Partner, *Gibson Dunn & Crutcher LLP*

Colin B. Davis is a partner in the Orange County office of Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher where he practices in the firm's Litigation Department. Davis' practice focuses on complex business and commercial litigation, with an emphasis on merger and acquisition and securities litigation. Davis represents public and private companies and their officers and directors in stockholder class actions, stockholder derivative actions, and appraisal actions, as well as related litigation in state and federal courts throughout the country. Davis also represents clients in a wide variety of other types of business litigation, including post-closing merger and acquisition disputes involving earnout provisions, fraud, and other contractual breaches. Additionally, Davis has represented clients in connection with governmental investigations and enforcement actions brought by the SEC, the Department of Justice, and other regulatory and enforcement agencies.



## Caroline Djang - Shareholder, *Buchalter*

Caroline Djang is an Irvine-based shareholder in Buchalter's Insolvency and Financial Law practice group and Co-Chair of the Orange County Litigation practice group. Djang has vast experience representing creditors, trustees, debtors, and committees in bankruptcy cases and adversary proceedings. Djang is a certified mediator and a Chapter 11 Subchapter V Trustee for the Central District of California. Djang serves as president of the Orange County Women Lawyers Association and on the Board of Directors of the Orange County Bar Association. Djang's honors include being named by SuperLawyers Magazine in their lists of Top 100 Southern California Attorneys, Top 50 Women, Top 50 Orange County, the Los Angeles Times as a Banking and Finance Visionary; and The Best Lawyers in America® for Litigation, Bankruptcy and Creditor Debtor Rights/Insolvency and Reorganization.



## Paul J. Fraidenburgh - Partner, *Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP*

Paul Fraidenburgh is an accomplished trial lawyer who focuses his practice on representing clients in high-stakes commercial litigation, arbitration and regulatory compliance matters. As lead counsel, Fraidenburgh has tried to conclusion numerous high-stakes business disputes. He has prevailed on behalf of clients in the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit and at the state Supreme Court level. Fraidenburgh represents clients ranging from government agencies to Fortune 100 companies across a wide range of industries, including technology, aviation, real estate, energy, sports and entertainment.



## Michelle M. Gourley - Partner, *Gibson Dunn & Crutcher LLP*

Michelle M. Gourley is a partner in the Orange County office of Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher and is a member of the firm's Mergers and Acquisitions and Private Equity Practice Groups. Gourley is a corporate transactional lawyer whose experience includes advising both strategic companies and private equity clients (including their portfolio companies) in connection with public and private merger transactions, stock and asset sales, joint ventures, strategic partnerships, and other complex corporate transactions. Gourley works with clients across a wide range of industries, and has extensive experience working with life sciences companies (pharma and medical device) and media, technology and entertainment companies.



## Steve Hanle - Partner, *Stradling Yocca Carlson & Rauth*

Steve Hanle is a technology litigator who has dedicated his 30 year career to safeguarding the rights of patent holders and defending competitors accused of infringement. In high-stakes situations, his strategic and practical approach aggressively protects the years of research and development his clients have poured into the technologies behind innovative medical devices, pharmaceuticals, telecommunications, optical advancements, automotive, and mechanical processes. Hanle melds aggressive, strategic and practical approaches to achieve victories in court that translate to victories for his clients' businesses. He has an outstanding record of winning cases on summary judgment, thereby avoiding the expense of trial. But, when necessary, Hanle goes the distance, winning cases before juries, judges and on appeal. Hanle also regularly leverages interim victories in litigation to achieve ideal settlements for his clients.



## Michael I. Katz - Managing Partner, *Katz Ruby & Carle LLP*

A formidable force in litigation and trial, Michael Katz's three decades of experience and strategic acumen have resulted in numerous landmark victories. As a former IP and business litigation partner at Morrison Foerster, Katz's leadership in many high stakes cases and trials make him an unparalleled asset to the firm's clients. Katz has represented a broad range of clients across many high-tech industries, including semiconductor, software, medical devices, healthcare, and biotech, as well as in traditional manufacturing, energy and agricultural sectors. His corporate clients range from Fortune 100 companies to successful family-run or regional business. He has also represented famous individuals such as Chuck Yeager, and the estates of Marilyn Monroe and the Marx Brothers. While Katz enjoys a reputation for zealously representing his clients in court, many of his repeat clients rely on him to resolve discretely intractable problems to avoid litigation.



## Christian Keeney - Principal, *Jackson Lewis P.C.*

Christian Keeney is an equity principal with Jackson Lewis P.C., one of the largest labor and employment law firms in the world. Keeney focuses his practice on employment litigation, including the defense of wage and hour class and PAGA actions, as well as cases involving discrimination, harassment, and retaliation. He is recognized in Chambers and Partners as one of the leading labor and employment litigators in California.



## Nikole Kingston - Partner, *O'Melveny & Myers LLP*

Nikole Kingston is an experienced M&A lawyer who represents a broad range of clients, including start-up, emerging growth, and Fortune 500 companies, as well as private equity firms, family owned entities, and individual owners, shareholders, and principals. She counsels companies with operations and interests in a broad range of industries, including health care, technology, personal care products, general consumer products, manufacturing, food, and agriculture, and has represented her clients in a wide range of business transactions, including stock and asset acquisitions, mergers, going-private transactions, minority investments, leveraged buyouts, joint ventures, related financings, spin-offs, and tender offers. Kingston serves as O'Melveny's Firmwide Hiring Partner, responsible for managing recruiting efforts across O'Melveny's 18 offices and is also an adjunct professor at The University of California, Irvine School of Law teaching Mergers & Acquisitions.



## Gloria Lee - Partner, *Rutan & Tucker LLP*

Gloria Lee is the firm's client relations partner and responsible for the strategic growth of business development opportunities for the Firm's attorneys and the implementation of client relationship initiatives for the Firm. Prior to becoming the firm's client relations partner, Lee focused on the financing and development of commercial, residential and resort properties. Her practice included representing lenders, developers, landlords and tenants in all aspects of real estate transactions, including real estate secured financings, acquisitions, dispositions, title review and due diligence analysis. She also has experience with the structuring, development and regulation of residential, commercial, condominium, timeshare, and fractional use planned developments and associations.



## Patricia Matias - Principal, *Jackson Lewis P.C.*

Patricia Matias is an equity principal in the Orange County office of Jackson Lewis P.C. She successfully defends employers in high-stakes, single-plaintiff litigation, including discrimination, harassment, retaliation, and wrongful termination matters, as well as in complex Private Attorneys General Act and class action matters. In addition to litigation, Matias provides practical advice regarding personnel policies and decisions, performs workplace investigations, conducts audits, and provides management training. She is featured in the 2025 edition of The Best Lawyers in America for her exceptional work in Employment Law - Management.



## Paul J. Nelson, CFLS - Founder, *Nelson Kirkman Law Office*

Paul J. Nelson is the founder of California firm Nelson Kirkman Family Law Attorneys. Certified by the State Bar of California Board of Legal Specialization in family law, he has extensive courtroom experience and knowledge of California family law, which has helped him build an impressive track record of successful outcomes for a wide range of clients. Nelson has seen (in his clients) and felt (personally) the pain of divorce, and seeks to help others prepare for and navigate the legal landscape of splitting up. Nelson holds an AV Preeminent® rating with Martindale-Hubbell®, the highest possible score for both legal ability and ethical standards. When not practicing law, Nelson enjoys spending time with his wife and four daughters. He is also an avid cyclist, world traveler, and excellent golfer.



## Mark D. Peterson - Partner, *O'Melveny & Myers LLP*

Mark Peterson is a partner in O'Melveny & Myers' Corporate Department, based in Newport Beach. He assists clients whenever they are exploring complex acquisitions, dealing with board-level issues, or seeking practical, business-savvy legal advice, because few understand the market and business pressures of the GC role like Peterson. He began his career at O'Melveny, and then spent 14 years in-house, serving as general counsel and chief legal officer of several public and private companies. Peterson subsequently returned to O'Melveny as a corporate and securities partner, and his clients comprise a diverse group of companies in industries including consumer products, healthcare, life sciences, medical devices, and technology. Peterson holds a J.D. from the University of California at Berkeley, and a B.S. from Brigham Young University. He serves as Board Chairman of USA Volleyball Foundation, and as a Board Member of the Forum for Corporate Directors and the UCI Audit Committee Summit.



## Wendy Peterson - General Counsel, *Knobbe Martens*

Wendy Peterson is general counsel to the Firm and handles all of its internal legal matters. Prior to joining Knobbe Martens in 2002, Peterson was general counsel of Wynn Oil Company, a manufacturer of automotive additives and provider of service contracts, and assistant general counsel of Parker-Hannifin Corporation's Seal Group, a manufacturer of rubber and engineered plastic products. From 1993 to 2000, Peterson was assistant general counsel of Wynn's International, Inc., a publicly-held corporation traded on the NYSE. From 1995 to 2000, Peterson also served as corporate secretary to Wynn's International. From 1985 to 1993, Peterson was a corporate and securities law attorney with O'Melveny & Myers. At O'Melveny, Peterson's practice focused on mergers and acquisitions, equity and debt financings, SEC compliance and general corporate law advice.



## Richard Reisman - Publisher, *Orange County Business Journal*

Richard Reisman is publisher of the Orange County Business Journal. Reisman joined the Business Journal in 1990. Since then, the publication's acceptance by the business community has been dramatic. Paid circulation and advertising volume has grown significantly, making it possibly the top Business Journal in the country. Prior to the business journal, Reisman was director of marketing for the Orange County edition of The Los Angeles Times. Earlier in his career, Reisman practiced law in San Francisco and Washington, D.C. While in private practice in Washington, Reisman served as special counsel to the House Ethics Committee. Reisman holds an MBA from UCLA, where he was awarded the R.C. Baker Foundation Fellowship, and a law degree from George Washington University, where he graduated with honors. Reisman is listed in "Who's Who in America" and has served on numerous boards.



## Michael J. Sexton - Shareholder, *Ogletree Deakins*

Michael J. Sexton specializes in employment advice and counsel and employment litigation. He has extensive experience in all areas of employment law, including wrongful termination, discrimination, harassment, wage and hour issues, family and medical leave, disability discrimination and accommodation and employee privacy. Sexton represents employers in state and federal courts in single and multi-plaintiff actions. He also defends employers against class actions and claims filed under the California Business and Professions Code Section 17200. He represents employers in various administrative agency matters, including the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing, California Department of Industrial Relations and the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.



## Vince Verde - Shareholder, *Ogletree Deakins*

Vince M. Verde is the head of the Ogletree's Trial Practice Group. He is a litigator and former prosecutor with extensive jury and non-jury trial experience. He has tried and won jury trials in multiple jurisdictions and represents employers in state and federal courts in single and multi-plaintiff actions. He founded Ogletree's Orange County office and was instrumental in the creation of Ogletree Trial University. His diverse practice includes the representation of regional and national clients in all phases of litigation involving employment, labor matters, commercial disputes, insurance and coverage matters, including D&O, E&O, health and disability. He has handled claims involving unfair competition, trade secret and non-compete matters, work place violence, intellectual property rights, class action lawsuits and claims against insurance agents and brokers.



## Peter Villar - Partner, *Troutman Pepper*

Peter Villar is a seasoned trial attorney who has successfully tried and defended dozens of high-stakes commercial disputes across the U.S. including several of the largest cases in the Central District of California. Villar represents companies across a spectrum of industries including private equity, technology, aerospace, apparel, manufacturing, energy, finance, life sciences, and real estate, and has litigated claims of securities fraud, breach of fiduciary duty, unfair competition, among others. Villar also has served on the board of directors of the Association of Business Trial Lawyers, Federal Bar Association, and Constitutional Rights Foundation. Additionally, Villar was recognized as a Best Lawyer in America "Lawyer of the Year" (2023) in the area of Securities Litigation.



## Todd R. Wulffson - Managing Partner, *CDF Labor Law LLP*

Todd R. Wulffson is the Orange County Office Managing Partner of CDF Labor Law LLP, a California-based defense labor, employment and immigration law firm with offices throughout the state. Wulffson has focused his practice on counseling and defending businesses in labor and employment matters for over 30 years. In addition to private practice, from 2006-2010, he served as general counsel and SVP of Human Resources to Palace Entertainment. Wulffson is also a frequent speaker, author and resource to employers with workforces in California on employment-related matters ranging from terminations, sexual harassment, pay practices, and classification of employees.