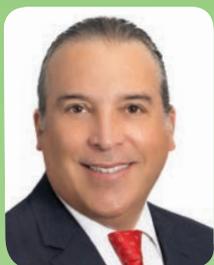


# TOP LITIGATORS & *Corporate Lawyers*



## 2025 TOP LITIGATORS &amp; CORPORATE LAWYERS

**ADDISON K. ADAMS**

ADAMS CORPORATE LAW

Addison K. Adams is the founder and principal attorney of Adams Corporate Law, a boutique corporate law firm specializing in mergers and acquisitions. With nearly three decades of legal experience, Adams has earned a reputation as a trusted advisor to

business owners, executives, and investors navigating complex corporate transactions. His practice focuses on mergers and acquisitions, private equity and financing transactions, corporate formations and governance, shareholder buyouts, and securities compliance.

Before founding Adams Corporate Law in 2015, Adams was a founding equity partner of Richardson & Patel LLP, a nationally recognized securities boutique with offices in Los Angeles and New York. Over the years, he has served as outside general counsel for a wide range of companies across Southern California, offering strategic guidance on growth, exit planning, and legal risk management. Known for his practical, solutions-oriented approach, Adams is committed to helping clients close deals efficiently and effectively—true to the firm's reputation as Lawyers who close deals.

Adams holds a Bachelor of Science in Finance from the University of Arizona and earned his Juris Doctor from the University of San Diego School of Law. He is licensed to practice in California and admitted to all federal and state courts in the region. A frequent speaker and podcast guest, Adams has shared insights on legal issues facing California businesses, navigating M&A negotiations, and structuring deals to align with long-term business goals.

Learn more about Addison Adams' experience and how Adams Corporate Law can support your next business transaction by visiting [adamscorporatelaw.com](http://adamscorporatelaw.com).

**NATHAN CARLE**

KATZ RUBY &amp; CARLE LLP

Nathan Carle is a seasoned general business litigator based in California, representing clients in a wide range of complex commercial disputes. With substantial experience in both state and federal courts, as well as in arbitration forums, Carle handles business conflicts involving fiduciary duties, breach of contract, business torts, partnership disputes, unfair competition, trade secrets, and other high stakes disputes. He is known for his practical, focused approach to litigation and his ability to distill complex legal and factual issues into persuasive arguments.

Carle has tried and arbitrated cases to successful outcomes and regularly achieves favorable settlements for clients through strategic negotiation. Clients value his calm, thoughtful guidance and ability to manage risk while aggressively protecting their interests.

Despite maintaining a boutique practice, Carle has effectively handled significant cases against much larger firms, demonstrating a command of the law and litigation process that consistently levels the playing field. He is skilled at managing document-heavy matters and coordinating expert-driven litigation efficiently, often delivering results comparable to larger litigation teams at a fraction of the cost.

Carle's experience across diverse industries—including real estate, professional services, and technology—positions him to provide clear, business-minded counsel that aligns litigation strategy with broader client goals. Above all, Carle is committed to delivering excellent legal work, responsive client service, and honest advice in every matter he handles.

**KATHLEEN CARTER**

MESSNER REEVES

With over 30 years of experience as a trial lawyer, Kathleen Carter is a seasoned advocate and corporate defense attorney. She is a partner with the Orange County Office of Messner Reeves LLP, where she leads a team of attorneys in complex litigation, often involving multiple parties, multi-million-dollar claims, and corporate reputational issues. Her law practice is multifaceted, covering commercial disputes and civil matters that involve contract claims, employment law, insurance bad faith, personal injury, and fraud.

Carter relies on her deep experience in litigation and business to provide her clients with sophisticated representation, regardless of the client's size or the gravity of the claims they are facing. She has established a multi-jurisdictional trial and litigation practice that is distinct from that of other trial lawyers. Her successful trial record, which includes defending a large international class-action lawsuit, is equally marked by her ability to resolve smaller matters for privately held companies and local nonprofits. California landlords seek Carter's guidance and representation in protecting their assets against expensive tenant habitability claims.

Contact Kathy at [kcarter@messner.com](mailto:kcarter@messner.com)

**BRAD CHAPIN**

RUTAN &amp; TUCKER, LLP

One of Rutan & Tucker, LLP's busiest trial attorneys, Brad Chapin is never too far removed from his last closing argument or his next opening statement. But Chapin's contribution to Rutan's clients does not begin and end with his trial expertise. He fashions his practice

in a way to meet the needs of each client, and that often means steering them away from conflict if that is the best course of action. And after 21 years of practicing law in Rutan's Litigation and Trial Department, Chapin has become more than a resource for his clients, he is a significant internal resource for the other Rutan attorneys.

Chapin's practice is diverse and touches on a variety of industries and practice areas, including complex business disputes involving unfair competition, trade secret theft, fraud, business interference claims, breakups and partnership disputes, civil embezzlement, real property, commercial landlord-tenant contracts and relationships, and construction contracting and defects. Chapin's practice also includes representing healthcare providers, including physician groups, ambulatory surgery centers, and medical billing companies. He has extensive experience defending consumer class actions, as well as assisting clients with product recalls. Chapin's practice includes representing large national companies located in and outside of California, as well as local businesses and business owners in the Orange County community.

Chapin practices in both State and Federal Courts, has successfully tried jury cases in California and Arizona, and successfully tried numerous arbitrations before retired judges and a former justice of the California Supreme Court.

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**JASON DE BRETTEVILLE**

STRADLING YOCCA CARLSON &amp; RAUTH LLP

Jason de Bretteville is a formidable attorney known for representing corporations and executives in high-stakes civil and criminal litigation. His tenacity and innovative approach allow him to turn perceived obstacles into winning strategies. With a deep understanding of industry regulations and court dynamics, de Bretteville has developed a reputation as a serious trial threat, adept at connecting with judges and juries alike.

From 2001 to 2006, de Bretteville served as an assistant U.S. attorney in the Central District of California, where he tried seven felony cases to verdict. His prosecutorial work included investigating and prosecuting significant crimes of violence and fraud, supervising federal agents in counter-terrorism efforts, and arguing numerous cases before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

In private practice, de Bretteville has achieved favorable settlements and victories in both trial and appellate courts for clients facing allegations of securities fraud, healthcare fraud, and violations of the False Claims Act and the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. His diverse clientele spans industries, including medical device manufacturers, hedge funds, private equity, investment banking, technology, and consumer goods.

Over the past five years, de Bretteville has continued to obtain outstanding results, including securing a rare voluntary dismissal on behalf of the former CEO of an Irvine based bio-science company a month before trial in a criminal health care fraud case, dismissals of securities class action claims brought against Endologix and Wisconsin Airlines, dismissal of First Amendment claims brought against Facebook, and a trial victory against Google resulting in a \$15 million jury award.

**STEVEN DI SAIA**

BUCHALTER

Steve Di Saia manages a high level and focused practice in the Irvine office of Buchalter, defending a diversity of high-damage claims involving products liability, mass and complex torts, and catastrophic injury. As the Practice Chair of the Products Liability Practice Group for the firm, with over 3 decades of experience in the field, Di Saia offers a rare level of understanding concerning the complex engineering systems involved in the diversity of product types and industries that he has extensively defended.

These products delve deeply into the fields of medical diagnostic and monitoring equipment and implantable products, pharmaceuticals, earth moving equipment, hydraulic manufacturing and processing equipment, power generation turbines, high voltage and electrical distribution equipment, industrial manufacturing and packaging machinery, appliances, and other technologies. On the litigation of components and chemical products, he has defended actions involving claimed exposure to asbestos, silica, air pollutants and fumes, benzene, petroleum hydrocarbons, agricultural products, and alleged product contaminants in processed and packaged foods, drinks, and alcoholic products.

Successful at trial early in his career, Di Saia has amassed over two decades of courtroom achievement in California and across the nation. He has defended clients at trial successfully in California, Oregon and Arizona, and has appeared as trial and coordinating counsel in multiple other jurisdictions. These matters have ranged from individual actions, to coordinated proceedings, MDLs, and class actions.



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## Buchalter



**CAROLINE DJANG**  
BUCHALTER

Caroline Djang is a Shareholder at Buchalter, where she is Co-Chair of the Orange County Litigation Practice and is a member of the firm's Insolvency and Financial Law Practice Group. Based in Irvine, Djang is widely recognized for her strategic counsel in bankruptcy and financial restructuring, representing creditors, trustees, debtors, and committees in high-stakes litigation.

A certified mediator and Chapter 11 Subchapter V Trustee for the Central District of California, Djang combines legal precision with practical insight—guiding clients through debt recovery strategies and financial distress with clarity and confidence. She is also a sought-after speaker on many topics, including the Small Business Reorganization Act.

Beyond her practice, Djang is deeply committed to the legal community. She currently serves as Immediate Past President of the Orange County Women Lawyers Association and serves on the Board of Directors for the Orange County Bar Association, the James T. King Bankruptcy Inn of Court and the Ninth Judicial Circuit Historical Society. Her previous roles include serving as a Lawyer Representative for the Central District of California and as an At-Large Member of the Ninth Circuit Judicial Conference Executive Committee.

Djang's contributions and leadership have earned widespread recognition. She has been named among the Top 100 Southern California Attorneys, Top 50 Women, and Top 50 Orange County Attorneys by Super Lawyers. Additional accolades include recognition by the Los Angeles Times as a Banking and Finance Visionary and inclusion in The Best Lawyers in America® for Litigation – Bankruptcy and Creditor Debtor Rights/Insolvency and Reorganization Law.

## EVERETT DOREY LLP



**SAMANTHA DOREY**  
EVERETT DOREY LLP

Samantha Dorey is a Founding Partner of Everett Dorey LLP and serves as trial counsel in high-impact cases in state and federal court. She specializes in complex civil litigation with an emphasis in catastrophic injury, employment law, habitability, mold, public entity defense, mass tort, asbestos litigation, and environmental law. Dorey represents multinational corporations, non-profits, cities, public agencies, school districts, property owners and property managers in all aspects of litigation. She also regularly advises clients on non-litigated matters, including development of risk management protocols and procedures related to property management and environmental issues.

As a leading litigator in California routinely retained as trial counsel in complex and challenging cases throughout the state, Dorey has shaped a firm of exceptionally talented litigators with diverse cultural and personal backgrounds, with particular focus on creating an environment that empowers female attorneys. She has received numerous industry awards for her work in the field, including but not limited to, 2024 and 2025 Top Women Lawyers, 2024 40 Under 40, and 2025 Leading Commercial Litigator by the Daily Journal.

Dorey is an Adjunct Professor at Chapman University, Dale E. Fowler School of Law where she teaches a course on litigation strategy and civil procedure in state and federal courts. She serves on the Board of Directors for the Public Law Center, a nonprofit providing free legal services to low-income residents and other nonprofits in Orange County. She previously served on the Board of Directors for the Orange County Lavender Bar Association, the official bar association for LGBTQ lawyers and allies. Her firm, Everett Dorey, has also invested considerable time, charitable contributions, employee volunteerism to advance social causes, issues, and to support the work of nonprofit organization and pro-bono work.

## Buchalter



**ANNE MARIE ELLIS**  
BUCHALTER

Anne Marie Ellis is the California Chair of Buchalter's Products Liability Practice Group and Chair of the Chemical Law and Prop. 65 Industry Group. Recognized by Chambers USA for her leadership in product liability and mass torts, Ellis focuses on defending complex product liability, personal injury, Proposition 65, and commercial litigation matters, as well as guiding clients through regulatory compliance and litigation prevention.

Her experience spans every phase of litigation and trial, including class actions and claims involving catastrophic injury, wrongful death, ADA accessibility, and consumer protection statutes like the CLRA. She is also adept at managing e-discovery, trade secret issues, and high-stakes regulatory matters involving multiple federal and state agencies.

Ellis counsels national and regional manufacturers, retailers, importers, and distributors across diverse industries including children's products, apparel, sporting goods, cosmetics, chemicals (including PFAS and pesticides), micromobility, food and hospitality. She helps companies proactively manage recalls, label compliance, warranties, user manuals, and other regulatory obligations.

A frequent speaker and author, Ellis contributes to advancing policy and best practices in PFAS, Proposition 65, and consumer product safety. She serves on several of Buchalter's leadership committees and is active in key industry groups.

Ellis is known for practical, early-stage strategies and rapid crisis response, working closely with executive teams to control risk and shape favorable outcomes in both litigation and regulatory environments.

## EVERETT DOREY LLP



**SEYMOUR EVERETT, III**  
EVERETT DOREY LLP

Seymour "Sy" Everett, III is a Founding Partner of Everett Dorey, LLP. Mr. Everett is a leading litigator in the Country and is routinely retained as trial counsel in complex and challenging cases. He represents corporations, high profile public figures, individuals, cities, public agencies, firefighters and police officers in all aspects of litigation.

He is admitted to practice in all courts in California, including United States Federal District Courts. Mr. Everett has argued before numerous Appellate Courts in the State of California and has multiple published decisions. His cases include catastrophic injuries, asbestos, employment law, toxic tort, habitability, mold, general liability, wildland fires, business interference, libel, slander, environmental and administrative compliance.

Mr. Everett is a member of the American Board of Trial Advocates ("ABOTA"), a highly respected national advocacy group dedicated to the preservation of the right to trial by jury. Committed to fostering and developing community service for the disadvantaged and promoting diversity, Mr. Everett was recognized as OC ABOTA "Volunteer of the Year" and awarded "DEI Champion" by the Orange County Coalition for Diversity in the Law.

The Daily Journal identified Mr. Everett as one of the Top 100 Lawyers in California, and he has been recognized as by Super Lawyers, Best Lawyers, and Benchmark Litigation. Mr. Everett holds the Chartered Property Casualty Underwriting (CPCU) designation and is a regular speaker at legal seminars for Fortune 500 Companies, Public Entities and Insurance Carriers; he is an adjunct professor at USC School of Law.

## FBFK LAW



**TODD FRIEDLAND**  
FBFK LAW

Todd G. Friedland is an acclaimed litigation attorney and mediator serving as a trusted advocate for entrepreneurs and middle-market companies navigating sophisticated legal challenges. As Managing Shareholder of FBFK Law's California offices, he leads robust teams handling complex disputes and high-stakes litigation in such fields as corporate governance, fiduciary obligations, trade secret misappropriation, manufacturing-related claims, unfair business practices, real estate, and business torts.

A respected leader in both the legal profession and broader community, Friedland has been recognized annually as one of the Top 50 Lawyers in Orange County nine consecutive years and among the Top 100 Super Lawyers in Southern California. Friedland has been named to the Southern California Super Lawyers list every year since 2011, holds an "AV Preeminent®" rating from Martindale-Hubbell and has been recognized by Best Lawyers in America.

Friedland is deeply involved in thought leadership and advancing the legal profession and community. He has served as President of the Orange County Bar Association, Chair of the Association of Business Trial Lawyers (Orange County), and President of both the Constitutional Rights Foundation of Orange County and Project Youth OC. He has been published in the Daily Journal on the business of law and has contributed insights to national publications such as The Legal Intelligencer. Friedland plays a key role in professionalism and mentoring initiatives, including the OCBA and statewide civility task forces.

Clients and colleagues consistently commend Friedland's practical judgment, skill and legal acumen resulting in innovative strategies for client success.

tfriedland@fbfk.law

## Holland &amp; Knight



**BRYAN S. GADOL**  
HOLLAND & KNIGHT LLP

Bryan S. Gadol is the head of the California Corporate, Mergers & Acquisitions (M&A) and Private Equity practice and a partner in Holland & Knight's Newport Beach and Century City offices. As a highly regarded corporate attorney with over two decades of experience, he advises clients through all stages of the corporate life cycle in connection with M&A, private equity, securities transactions, reorganizations and other corporate matters across a variety of sectors, including technology, consumer products, beauty, medical device and manufacturing.

Gadol is known for his ability to navigate intricate legal landscapes, offering practical solutions in matters such as corporate formation, compliance and strategic M&A transactions. He has a deep understanding of both the legal and business challenges his clients face, allowing him to deliver results that align with their long-term goals.

In addition, Gadol is a regular speaker and author on a variety of M&A and private equity topics. In 2025, he was recognized by The Legal 500 United States in the M&A/Corporate and Commercial – Private Equity Buyouts section, reinforcing his reputation as a trusted advisor to senior executives and board of directors. His work in the M&A space has earned him a loyal client base that values his strategic insight, detailed legal knowledge and commitment to delivery exceptional results. Gadol's leadership continues to help shape Holland & Knight's success in the corporate legal landscape.

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## 2025 TOP LITIGATORS &amp; CORPORATE LAWYERS

**DANIEL C. GAVILANES**

ADAMS CORPORATE LAW

Daniel Christopher Gavilanes is a partner at Adams Corporate Law, a boutique corporate law firm specializing in mergers and acquisitions. With expertise in corporate law, transactions, and tax law, Gavilanes advises privately held businesses, owners, executives, investors, and private equity funds on how to properly structure and close complex deals. His experience encompasses mergers and acquisitions, private equity transactions, entity formation and dissolution, shareholder agreements, corporate governance, and all manner of commercial agreements.

Prior to joining Adams Corporate Law, Gavilanes served as corporate counsel to a private investment firm, and legal consultant to one of the largest alternative investment managers in America based in Orange County. During his time at PwC, Gavilanes assisted large institutional clients and high-net-worth individuals in transactional tax planning and compliance matters. These roles equipped Gavilanes with a deep understanding of the legal and financial intricacies involved in high-stakes transactions. At Adams Corporate Law, Gavilanes has developed a strong reputation for helping clients navigate the full lifecycle of a deal—from structuring and negotiation to closing—reflecting the firm's reputation as lawyers who close deals.

Gavilanes earned his Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from California State University, Fullerton. He obtained his Juris Doctor, cum laude, from Whittier College School of Law, along with certificates in Comparative Business Transactions and Legal Writing. Gavilanes also received his LL.M. in Transactional Taxation from the Boston University School of Law. He is licensed to practice in California and admitted to all federal and state courts throughout the state.

Learn more about Daniel Gavilanes' experience and how Adams Corporate Law can support your next business transaction by visiting [adamscorporatelaw.com](http://adamscorporatelaw.com).

**JASON E. GOLDSTEIN**

BUCHALTER

Jason E. Goldstein is a Shareholder at Buchalter and he has been litigating cases out of Buchalter's Irvine office for more than two decades. Goldstein is a trial lawyer that specializes in real property related litigation, with an emphasis on representing private money (aka "hard money") lenders, brokers, servicers and investors and suing title insurance companies and escrow companies on behalf of insured owners and lenders. However, Goldstein's diverse litigation acumen has resulted in his broad client base which ranges from individual real property owners to national banks and credit unions – all of which utilize his litigation expertise to resolve a wide-range of ever differing situations.

Goldstein is a Co-Chairman of Buchalter's Title Insurance and Escrow Group, a fellow of the American College of Mortgage Attorneys ("ACMA"), an ACMA Title Insurance Committee member, and former President of the Orange County Bar Association Insurance Law section.

On July 28, 2022, the California Mortgage Association, a pre-eminent organization dedicated to education and the advancement of private money lending, awarded Goldstein the President's Award plaque to recognize his exemplary service to the organization.

Goldstein was also included in the 2024 & 2025 editions of The Best Lawyers in America for Insurance Law.

When Goldstein is not working, he spends time with his wife, sons and friends, cheers on his USC Trojans and Miami Hurricanes and plays bass (semi-poorly) in his rock band "Confidential."

**GEORGE HAMPTON**

FBFK LAW

George Hampton is a veteran trial lawyer and strategic advisor who brings practical solutions and creative thinking to high-stakes legal and business challenges. He represents tech entrepreneurs, investors, and high-net-worth individuals who need more than just legal answers—they need clarity, strategy, and results.

Known for his calm, no-nonsense approach, Hampton simplifies complexity and delivers smart, effective outcomes in commercial disputes, real estate matters, and intellectual property litigation. His ability to cut through red tape, anticipate risks, and design forward-thinking solutions has made him a go-to advisor for founders, C-suite executives, and family offices.

Hampton has recovered millions in cases involving fraud, fiduciary abuse, and partnership conflicts. He's also been at the forefront of legal innovation—authoring legislation that laid the groundwork for California's use of electronic signatures long before digital contracts became standard.

In addition to his litigation work, Hampton counsels clients on business structuring, contract strategy, and risk mitigation—helping them grow and protect their ventures with confidence. His fluency in both legacy asset protection and emerging tech issues, such as data privacy and digital IP, provides a competitive edge.

Clients appreciate Hampton's discretion, creativity, and deep understanding of both traditional and disruptive industries. He is known for building long-term relationships rooted in trust, responsiveness, and results.

When the stakes are high and outcomes matter, George Hampton is the trusted advocate who brings vision to execution—and gets things done.

**ANDREW S. HOLLINS**

MESSNER REEVES LLP

Andrew S. Hollins is a seasoned trial attorney and a partner with the Orange County Office of Messner Reeves LLP. His esteemed trial practice is well-known throughout California, and he has previously been named "Trial Lawyer of the

Year" by the Orange County Chapter of the American Board of Trial Advocates (ABOTA). This distinction is reserved for well-regarded trial attorneys with notable success trying cases in state and federal courts.

Hollins has devoted his career to advocacy. He defends clients of all sizes across various industries. He brings decades of experience to each client matter, along with the insight that comes with a successful history in corporate defense. His national trial practice has taken him before courts throughout the country, and he has effectively tried cases in California and seven other states, as well as before the United States Court of Federal Claims. His track record of achieving favorable outcomes for his clients is a testament to his legal expertise and dedication to protecting them.

Contact Andrew at [ahollins@messner.com](mailto:ahollins@messner.com)

**PEGGY HOSKING**

BUCHALTER

Peggy Hosking, a distinguished shareholder at Buchalter, is dedicated to helping clients reduce risk, build resilience, safeguard assets, maximize profitability, and preserve their legacies.

Serving as outside general counsel,

Hosking provides forward-thinking legal counsel that supports business owners throughout the full lifecycle of their enterprise - from inception and formation through expansion, sale, or generational transition.

Widely recognized for her unwavering integrity and deep expertise in business law, commercial real estate, and mergers and acquisitions, Hosking consistently delivers strategic, results-driven solutions tailored to her clients' goals.

Commended for her leadership and honored as both an OC Visionary and a Leader of Influence, Hosking also serves as Co-Founder and Co-Chair of Buchalter's Equine Law Industry Group - an area where she combines her legal acumen with more than 40 years of hands-on experience as a competitor in hunter/jumper, reining, and dressage, and a boutique breeder of Warmbloods.

Hosking's unwavering commitment to excellence is evident in her distinguished track record - whether she's navigating complex multi-million-dollar ranch transactions, negotiating the strategic acquisition or disposition of a business or advancing her community through her work with foster youth scholarship and veteran support programs.

Peggy Hosking earned her JD from Loyola Law School, is a member of the California Bar Association.

**CHRIS IVEY**

STRADLING YOCCA CARLSON &amp; RAUTH LLP

Chris Ivey is a business-savvy lawyer specializing in providing strategic solutions that empower companies across the United States at every stage of their lifecycle. With over 30 years of experience, Ivey has

facilitated hundreds of mergers and acquisitions for both public and private companies, and he has played a pivotal role in venture capital financings, private equity transactions, recapitalizations, and public capital market activities. His insightful advice cultivates companies that become attractive acquisition targets for strategic acquirors and private equity investors.

Renowned for prioritizing his clients' interests, Ivey has forged lasting relationships with businesses spanning various industries. He takes the time to understand his clients' operations, listening to their concerns while leveraging his extensive experience to deliver practical solutions. By anticipating challenges before they arise, he positions his clients for long-term success. Over the last several years Ivey and his team have completed 50 acquisitions on behalf of engineering firm, Salas O'Brien. Other well-known clients include K1 Speed, Inc., Compass, Inc. and Maui Land & Pineapple Company, Inc.

Often serving as outside general counsel, Ivey provides responsive counsel to boards of directors and executives in transactional and financing matters. Whether addressing fiduciary duties, corporate governance, or securities compliance, he delivers a level of certainty that streamlines complex legal matters, ultimately saving time and resources for his clients. Chris Ivey also serves on the firm's Management and Executive Committees and is a member of the Board of Directors of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Orange County and the Inland Empire.

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**Eric Kennedy**  
Office Managing  
Shareholder  
Litigation

**Steven Di Saia**  
Shareholder  
Products Liability

**Caroline Djang**  
Shareholder  
Insolvency

**Anne Marie Ellis**  
Shareholder  
Products Liability

**Jason Goldstein**  
Shareholder  
Litigation

**Peggy Hosking**  
Shareholder  
Corporate

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## 2025 TOP LITIGATORS &amp; CORPORATE LAWYERS

**Katz  
Ruby  
& Carle**



**MICHAEL KATZ**  
KATZ RUBY & CARLE LLP

Michael Katz is the Managing Partner of Katz Ruby Carle LLP, a premier boutique litigation firm known for its sophisticated handling of high-stakes disputes. With over three decades of litigation experience, Katz is recognized as one of the leading trade secret lawyers in California and across the United States. His strategic insight and relentless advocacy have driven numerous landmark victories in both courtrooms and behind-the-scenes resolutions.

Before founding Katz Ruby Carle, Katz was a partner in the Intellectual Property and Business Litigation groups at Morrison & Foerster LLP, where he led and won complex, high-profile cases. His litigation practice spans a wide array of industries—including semiconductors, software, medical devices, healthcare, biotech, manufacturing, energy, and agriculture—representing clients ranging from Fortune 100 companies to regional businesses and family enterprises.

Katz has also served as trusted counsel to notable individuals and estates, including aviation legend Chuck Yeager and the estates of Marilyn Monroe and the Marx Brothers. While he is known for his tenacity and courtroom skill, many long-term clients rely on Katz to resolve sensitive or seemingly intractable disputes quietly and effectively, without resorting to litigation. A formidable force in any legal forum, Michael Katz combines legal excellence with strategic discretion, earning him the respect of clients, colleagues, and adversaries alike.

**Holland & Knight**



**SARAH KELLY-KILGORE**  
HOLLAND & KNIGHT LLP

Sarah Kelly-Kilgore is a litigation attorney in Holland & Knight's Newport Beach and Los Angeles offices and a member of the firm's Litigation and Dispute Resolution Practice. Kilgore focuses her practice on a wide variety of litigation matters.

Kilgore has experience litigating cases in a broad range of practice areas, including employment litigation, fraud, business torts, defamation, securities and investments, real estate, contracts, federal agency enforcement actions, unfair competition, trade secrets, director and officer liability, fraudulent conveyance corporate governance disputes, and shareholder and consumer class action litigation. She has been lead counsel in a number of high-profile cases involving significant national and international public attention, including matters reported in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post* and *The Boston Globe*.

In addition, Kilgore regularly advises business entities on matters of employment law, including sexual harassment, discrimination and wrongful termination. Her clients include public companies, private businesses, executives, and celebrities. She has regularly been recognized for her work by top legal publications, including by *The Best Lawyers in America* as "One to Watch" in Southern California in both Litigation – Securities and Commercial Litigation (2022-2025), as well as by *Southern California Super Lawyers* magazine (2020-2025).

**Buchalter**



**ERIC KENNEDY**  
BUCHALTER

Eric Kennedy is the Managing Shareholder of Buchalter's Orange County office. Drawing on two decades of experience, Kennedy's personal practice focuses on complex litigation matters in two primary areas:

(1) Real Estate. Kennedy routinely handles matters involving owners, operators, investors, developers, landlords, commercial tenants, purchase agreements, SPVs/SPEs, leases, financing, construction and development, and land use and entitlements.

(2) Corporate Financing, Governance and Operations. Kennedy regularly represents clients in disputes involving all aspects of corporate financing, governance, and operations, including disputes involving founders, directors, managers, officers, shareholders, investors, lenders, partners, affiliates, vendors, etc.

Kennedy also has significant experience defending consumer class actions and disputes involving contracts, unfair competition, fiduciary relationships, false advertising, and trade secrets. Kennedy represents clients in a variety of industries, including technology, retail, apparel, social media, consumer products, and automotive.

Kennedy handles matters in both state and federal court and has tried cases on both coasts.

**C&W**  
CUMMINS & WHITE, LLP  
LAWYERS



**ERIC M. KHODADIAN**  
CUMMINS & WHITE LLP

Cummins & White's business litigation partner Eric M. Khodadian, who has successfully represented clients ranging from small businesses to Fortune 500 companies, handles a broad spectrum of litigation, including business, intellectual property, and real estate cases, among others. Eric's courtroom successes have made him a sought-after litigator.

Eric credits this success to his unique journey in the profession, which has shaped the way he views cases, how to litigate them, and ultimately win. A graduate of USC Gould School of Law, he remembers his first law job interview: "They instructed me to bring a mouthguard and boxing gloves." Eric explained, "The job was in-house legal at a sports management company representing UFC fighters. The interview was a sparring session where I had to fight different members of the staff. I got the job."

That same attitude has made him a formidable trial attorney. Before joining Cummins & White, Eric practiced at multiple national firms, handling high-profile, multi-million-dollar disputes, as well as running his own successful practice.

"The best compliment was a client who told me he really thought I cared about his case. The most rewarding part is learning about the client's business, creating a litigation strategy, and winning the case. There is nothing like it. I was drawn to Cummins & White for its almost 75-year legacy," Eric says. "Our team cares about our clients, and we want to win. Our employees are amazing. I'm looking forward to continuing to provide outstanding legal services to the community and businesses."

**HKP**  
HART KIENLE PENTECOST  
Attorneys at Law



**ANDREW C. KIENLE**  
HART KIENLE PENTECOST

Andrew C. Kienle is a Shareholder and Managing Partner at Hart Kienle Pentecost. He manages the civil litigation and transactional departments of the Firm. In his nearly 30 years of practice, Kienle specializes in representing trustees, beneficiaries and conservators in trust and estate disputes, as well as clients involved in complex business and real estate matters in state and federal court. He is a seasoned trial lawyer and represents his clients in all aspects of litigation, arbitration, mediation and administrative hearings.

A recognized voice in the legal community, Kienle is a speaker at various industry events, on webinars and podcasts, where he shares practical insights for trust and estate clients and business owners navigating legal risks. Kienle has been named to the California Super Lawyers list, a distinction awarded to attorneys who have demonstrated outstanding professional achievement and peer recognition. His litigation achievements include published appellate decisions relating to significant trust and estate legal issues. Clients trust Kienle for his courtroom presence, industry knowledge, and unyielding dedication to delivering favorable results. Based in Orange County, he is a proud member of the California State Bar, the Orange County Bar Association, and the California Lawyers Association. Kienle's leadership and litigation acumen continue to make him one of the region's most trusted and respected attorneys.

**NELSON KIRKMAN**  
FAMILY LAW ATTORNEYS & ADVISORS



**GRAHAM KIRKMAN**  
NELSON KIRKMAN FAMILY  
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Graham Kirkman is a dedicated attorney and Certified Family Law Specialist, certified by the State Bar of California. A graduate of Chapman University School of Law, Kirkman brings both academic rigor and practical experience to his practice, offering clients knowledgeable, compassionate, and results-driven representation in family law matters.

Kirkman focuses exclusively on family law and handles a wide range of complex legal issues including divorce, child custody and visitation, support matters, property division, domestic violence restraining orders, and post-judgment modifications. His certification as a family law specialist reflects a demonstrated depth of experience, tested expertise, and a continuing commitment to professional excellence in this specialized area.

Known for his integrity, strategic thinking, and client-focused approach, Kirkman works closely with individuals and families during some of the most challenging times in their lives. Whether litigating in court or negotiating settlements, he strives to protect his clients' rights while promoting fair and practical solutions that serve their long-term interests.

Kirkman's clear communication style and transparent advocacy help clients feel informed and empowered throughout the legal process. His meticulous attention to detail, combined with a sincere understanding of the emotional complexities of family law, has earned him the trust of both clients and colleagues.

Proud to serve families across California, Kirkman remains actively engaged in the legal community through continued education, mentorship, and professional associations. His practice is driven by a genuine commitment to helping clients navigate family transitions with clarity and confidence.



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**– Todd Friedland,**  
*California Managing Shareholder*



*Todd Friedland*

*John Stephens*

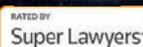
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## 2025 TOP LITIGATORS & CORPORATE LAWYERS



**KARLA KRAFT**

STRADLING YOCCA CARLSON & RAUTH LLP

Karla Kraft is known for her robust expertise across a wide spectrum of litigation. With a career characterized by enduring professional relationships, Kraft is consistently sought after to litigate diverse matters, showcasing her adaptability and competence in tackling new challenges. She specializes in complex commercial litigation and has a significant focus on class action defense and employment-related issues, including defending against single plaintiff lawsuits, wage-and-hour class actions, and PAGA actions. Additionally, she guides clients through pre-litigation disputes and strategic policy decisions.

Kraft's proficiency extends to various business litigation matters, encompassing defense of consumer matters, restrictive covenants, trade secrets, unfair competition, and more. Clients appreciate her intuitive ability to synergize legal strategy with business considerations, allowing her to tailor her approach based on the unique objectives of each case. This client-centric strategy results in efficient, business-savvy resolutions delivered through streamlined teams and judicious research. Her clients include Johnson & Johnson, Ringler Associates, and Specialty Enzymes and Biotechnologies.

Her accolades reflect her notable contributions to the legal field, including the Anti-Defamation League's Marcus Kaufman Jurisprudence Award, the Segerstrom Center for the Arts' Arts and Business Leadership Award, and recognition as a Best Lawyer in America from 2019-2025. Beyond her practice, Kraft is actively involved in community service, serving on the Boards of Directors of the Public Law Center and the Segerstrom Center for the arts and the Board of Trustees for Harbor Day School, further affirming her commitment to both her profession and community.



**MORGAN LEVANGER**

NELSON KIRKMAN FAMILY LAW ATTORNEYS

Morgan Levanger is a partner at Nelson Kirkman and a dedicated family law attorney who focuses his practice exclusively on family law. Morgan successfully represents high earners and high net worth individuals in cases involving dissolution of marriage, property division, support, custody, and other intricate family law issues.

Morgan is known for his meticulous preparation and in-depth understanding of the law, which allows him to position cases for early resolution or trial from the outset. His strategic approach not only streamlines litigation but also enhances his ability to achieve favorable settlements outside of court.

As a seasoned negotiator, Morgan combines legal insight with practical strategy to protect his clients' interests efficiently and effectively. He brings clarity and focus to emotionally charged situations, guiding clients through challenging transitions with professionalism and confidence.

Morgan is a clear and effective communicator who prioritizes keeping his clients fully informed through every state of their case. He ensures that clients understand their legal options, the status of the proceedings, and what to expect at every step of the legal process. Morgan's responsiveness and ability to explain complex legal issues in a straightforward manner gives his clients confidence and peace of mind. Morgan's commitment to open communication fosters strong attorney-client relationships and allows for thoughtful, informed decision-making in even the most challenging family law matters.

Morgan's sophisticated understanding of family law sets him apart in the field and ensures his clients receive knowledgeable and results-driven representation.

Morgan is a member of the California and Utah State Bar.



**MICHELE MARYOTT**

GIBSON DUNN

Michele Maryott, partner in Charge of Gibson Dunn's Orange County office, Co-Chair of the firm's Trials Practice Group, and a seasoned employment litigator, attributes her success in class actions and complex commercial disputes to a combination of curiosity, collaboration, and hard work. She has litigated a wide range of labor and employment matters, including defending employers against wage and hour and discrimination class actions, and retaliation, sexual harassment, wrongful termination, and whistleblower claims in federal and state courts, as well as in administrative proceedings and arbitrations.

Drawing from her experience trying more than 25 cases, Maryott thrives on uncovering the facts for new areas, identifying compelling themes, and finding shared human experiences that resonate with jurors and judges alike. While she deeply values the trust her clients place in her, Maryott is equally committed to fostering the next generation of trial lawyers and advocates heavily to create meaningful opportunities for junior team members.

Maryott is currently a member of the Board of Advisors of Pepperdine University School of Law, and previously served as a member of the Board of Directors of United Cerebral Palsy of Orange County and the Board of Governors for the Orange County Chapter of the Association of Business Trial Lawyers. Additionally, Maryott has served as a volunteer deputy district attorney for the County of Orange, representing the People of California in multiple trials and other criminal proceedings and obtaining convictions in all her trials.



Andrew S. Hollins  
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Kathleen Carter  
kcarter@messner.com



Scott Monroe  
smonroe@messner.com

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## THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO CALIFORNIA DIVORCE IS HERE

AN INTERVIEW WITH  
**PAUL NELSON, ESQ.**

*The Dissolution Solution: A Divorce Lawyer's Advice on the Best Ways to Part Ways* (River Grove Books) just published. Featuring a foreword by the *Orange County Business Journal's* very own Executive Editor Peter J. Brennan, it's already receiving high praise.

Nicholas A. Salick, prominent divorce attorney for Kanye West, gave this glowing endorsement of the book: "An indispensable tool to prepare for divorces, whether you are the divorcing spouse, a family law practitioner, or simply curious about the process."

Michael Ashley, Paul's coauthor, sat down with Paul to conduct the following interview:

**Q:** Why did you want to write this book?

**A:** My inspiration came from observing my clients' experiences on a daily basis. As a seasoned family law attorney, I frequently encounter individuals who, despite being successful and well-educated in their own domains, are completely baffled by the divorce process. I wanted to provide them with guidance and insight to demystify what lies ahead. Having informative reading material, especially before issues escalate, can be immensely beneficial.

**Q:** Why is it helpful to read a book like this from a divorce expert?

**A:** Just as many people now use WebMD to self-diagnose medical maladies, many individuals now turn to erroneous online sources for divorce information. It used to be that people would Google what to do. Nowadays, they query ChatGPT. Or ask their hairdresser. Why not turn to someone who has successfully worked in this field his whole life? Once upon a time, my dad used to say, "If you don't know diamonds, you better know

your jeweler." Here's my update: "If you don't know family law, you better know a family law attorney."

**Q:** Who is this book for?

**A:** This book is designed for anyone going through, considering, or completing a divorce. It combines informative content with an engaging writing style. While the subject is serious, we've made it reader-friendly. The book includes numerous real-life stories covering a wide range of topics, including planning, attorney selection, conflict resolution, children, mediation, trial, and life after divorce. Even if you're not personally experiencing divorce, you likely know someone who is or who's contemplating it.

**Q:** What can readers expect to learn?

**A:** It's my hope they learn how to correctly approach divorce. Going in with your eyes open is the best preparation. To this end, we are careful to explain common mistakes and errors to avoid. Perhaps surprisingly, in the first two chapters we emphasize the importance of avoiding divorce, if possible. As someone who has personally gone through the experience, I wouldn't wish it on anyone. This book shows you how to avoid needless expenses, how to simplify complex matters, and how to make things less traumatic for yourself and your family.

**Q:** What's something that might surprise readers?

**A:** They might not expect to read so many stories with elements of humor. Despite the seriousness of what can be a very difficult situation, we offer lighthearted anecdotes to enliven

the material. My view is always: How can we take chicken bones to make chicken soup?

**Q:** As a veteran family law attorney, what advice do you have for someone contemplating a high-stakes divorce?

**A:** Find the right attorney for you. It certainly doesn't have to be me. But you do need someone competent, someone you trust. It sounds funny to say this, but in some ways, your relationship to your family lawyer can be likened to a (short-lived) marriage. That's why we even include vows between lawyers and clients in the book. These are promises both sides can make to facilitate the best working relationship.

*A member of the Family Law section of the Orange County Bar Association, Paul Nelson, Esq., also belongs to the Family Law section of the State Bar of California and the J. Reuben Clark Law Society. As a certified Family Law Specialist, he has tried hundreds of family law matters, giving him uncommon familiarity with local judicial officers and opposing counsels. These are strategic advantages evidenced by his winning track record. Paul was chosen as a Super Lawyer for 2021, 2022 and 2023. He also holds an AV Preeminent® rating with Martindale-Hubbell®, the highest possible score for both legal ability and ethical standards.*

*Paul is the author of *The Dissolution Solution: A Divorce Lawyer's Advice on the Best Ways to Part Ways*, now available for purchase on Amazon. Filled with practical advice, history, interesting facts, real-world stories, and even viewpoints from other experts, his work is an informative guidebook for anyone going through one of the most difficult processes couples can face.*

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## 2025 TOP LITIGATORS &amp; CORPORATE LAWYERS



**SCOTT MONROE**  
MESSNER REEVES LLP

Scott Monroe, a business lawyer and trial attorney, is a trusted legal advisor to businesses of all sizes in Orange County. As a partner in the OC office of Messner Reeves LLP, he

collaborates with companies across a diverse range of industries, from startups to established corporations. Monroe serves the business community in two key ways: as outside general counsel and as defense counsel in civil and commercial lawsuits, including those involving habitability claims.

On the business side of his practice, Monroe enjoys working with corporate clients as outsourced general counsel. This work involves providing legal guidance on regular issues that arise with contracts, employees, and intellectual property. His ability to address and diffuse business disputes early on can be a valuable asset to his clients, who often struggle with managing the financial and reputational issues that arise.

Likewise, Monroe's litigation and trial practice is comprehensive, offering a variety of corporate defense services. He defends individuals and companies in all areas of liability, with a particular focus on catastrophic injury and wrongful death, product and premises liability, construction defects and property damage, as well as business and contract disputes. This breadth of experience and expertise in defending complex and multi-party matters makes a difference in the level of representation he can provide to his clients.

Contact Scott at [smonroe@messner.com](mailto:smonroe@messner.com)



**PAUL NELSON**  
NELSON KIRKMAN FAMILY  
LAW ATTORNEYS

Paul Nelson is the founder of Nelson Kirkman Family Law Attorneys, a premier California firm dedicated exclusively to high-net-worth divorces. With decades of experience, Nelson is certified by the State Bar of California Board of Legal Specialization in Family Law and is

widely regarded as one of the leading divorce attorneys for entrepreneurs, executives, and business owners throughout the state.

Nelson's practice is rooted in precision, discretion, and results. He brings extensive courtroom experience and a deep command of California family law to every case, developing strategies that preserve wealth, protect reputations, and position clients for long-term success. Known for his relentless advocacy and sharp negotiating skills, Nelson consistently delivers exceptional outcomes in matters involving complex asset division, business valuations, and spousal support disputes.

His accolades reflect this reputation. Nelson holds the prestigious AV Preeminent rating from Martindale-Hubbell, has earned twenty five-star ratings on Avvo, and has been honored for several consecutive years by Super Lawyers. He has also been named to The OC 500 list by the Orange County Business Journal for the past three years—a recognition reserved for the 500 most influential individuals in Orange County.

A frequent legal commentator, Nelson's insights have been featured in Forbes, Fortune, and the Orange County Business Journal. He is also the author of the Amazon best-seller *The Dissolution Solution*, which outlines a proven strategy for navigating high-asset divorces. Nelson remains active in the legal community through the Orange County Bar Association, the State Bar of California, and the J. Reuben Clark Law Society.



**JEFF REEVES**  
REEVES & WEISS LLP

Jeff Reeves handles complex business disputes across multiple industries including technology, entertainment, real estate, and life sciences. He regularly handles contract, defamation, trade secret, tort, and civil theft cases.

He recently served as lead trial counsel for a world-renowned neurosurgeon pursuing tens of millions in unpaid royalties from NuVasive, Inc. Reeves also recently tried two jury cases in Los Angeles: one involving top film producers and a foreign distributor (mistrial), and another for a luxury real estate developer in Bel Air, where the jury cleared the client of malice and fraud.

In other recent matters, he represented a leading cannabis brand in arbitration against a distributor and led a defamation suit for the former CEO and executives of Microsemi against Microchip Technology, settling pre-trial. He also secured a full trial and appellate victory in a \$45 million fiduciary duty case for executives of BioNutritional Research Group, makers of PowerCrunch™ bars.

Reeves is active in the community, serving on the boards of Hoag Charity Sports and El Niguel Country Club, and previously co-chaired UCI Law's Public Service Awards.

Before co-founding Reeves & Weiss, Reeves spent 26 years at Gibson Dunn—eight as Partner-in-Charge of the Orange County office—and later served as a Senior Partner at Theodora Oringer PC.

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## 2025 TOP LITIGATORS & CORPORATE LAWYERS

### Holland & Knight



**DAVID A. ROBINSON**  
HOLLAND & KNIGHT LLP

David A. Robinson is the executive partner of Holland & Knight's Newport Beach office and a seasoned trial attorney with more than 40 years of experience in complex business disputes. Recognized as a Southern California

Super Lawyer and AV-rated by Martindale-Hubbell, he brings a wealth of insight and strategic counsel to high-stakes matters.

Robinson focuses in complex business trials and arbitrations across multiple jurisdictions, having served as lead counsel in more than 10 states. He serves as outside general counsel and chief legal strategist for a select group of clients, including corporations, limited liability companies, partnerships and other business entities, high-net-worth individuals, family offices, government agencies and industry associations.

Licensed to practice in California, Colorado and Nevada, Robinson has successfully prosecuted and defended cases involving trade secret misappropriation, unfair competition, intellectual property, corporate governance, real estate acquisition and development, land use, water rights, healthcare, civil rights, and environmental and regulatory disputes. He is also highly experienced in shareholder derivative litigation in both federal and state courts.

As executive partner, Robinson plays a key role in elevating Holland & Knight's Litigation and Dispute Resolution Practice throughout Orange County. Under his leadership, the Newport Beach office has expanded its reach in business litigation, regulatory challenges and cross-border matters. In 2024, he was honored as an Orange County Visionary by the Los Angeles Times and currently serves as chair of the Dean's Council at UC Riverside's A. Gary Anderson School of Business.

### Katz Ruby & Carle



**BYRON RUBY**  
KATZ RUBY & CARLE LLP

Byron Ruby is a founding partner of Katz Ruby & Carle LLP and is a rising star in the legal field. His practice bridges high-stakes litigation advocacy and strategic counsel. He represents public and private

companies, emerging ventures, and individual executives in complex business and intellectual-property disputes, securities litigation, and cutting-edge constitutional matters—including First Amendment and Anti-SLAPP cases—before state and federal courts.

Prior to founding Katz Ruby & Carle LLP, Ruby served with the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Department of Justice, legal nonprofits, McKinsey & Company, DLA Piper, and other trial boutiques.

Those experiences, together with engagements for Fortune 500 corporations and AmLaw Global Top 15 firms, honed his ability to navigate multifaceted commercial and regulatory challenges while delivering cost-efficient results. He has published scholarships on the First and Eleventh Amendments and is a frequent commentator on litigation strategy, innovation, and risk management. Clients and colleagues commend his intellectual rigor, collaborative style, and unwavering commitment to achieving decisive victories for clients across California.

Ruby graduated summa cum laude from the University of California, Berkeley, then earned a joint degree from Yale University and Harvard Law School, collecting Dean's Scholar Awards and graduating with Latin Honors. He clerked for the Honorable John W. Holcomb of the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California and externed for the Honorable Jeffrey Meyer of the District of Connecticut.

### Katz Ruby & Carle



**DAVID SARFATI**  
KATZ RUBY & CARLE LLP

David Sarfati is the advocate corporations need when enterprise-defining stakes are on the line. His practice spans complex business disputes, securities litigation, trust and

estates, litigation, and high-risk employment matters. Whether prosecuting claims or mounting defenses, Sarfati has repeatedly delivered decisive victories—resolving and defending multimillion-dollar actions while safeguarding clients' market positions and reputations.

Sarfati began his career at the New York firm Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP, then refined his trial craft at elite California boutiques, including Hueston Hennigan LLP. Today, he leverages Am Law-caliber strategies through lean teams, regularly outmaneuvering major law firms and achieving superior results at a fraction of their overhead.

A relentless strategist and persuasive courtroom presence, Sarfati is known for distilling intricate fact patterns into clear, compelling narratives that resonate with judges, juries, and arbitrators alike. He also counsels boards and executives on litigation avoidance, regulatory exposure, and crisis management, emphasizing pragmatic solutions that align with business objectives.

Sarfati earned his J.D. from Columbia Law School, where he was distinguished as both a James Kent and Harlan Fiske Stone Scholar. He graduated magna cum laude from the University of California, Irvine with a degree in Criminology, Law & Society. Clients praise his intellectual rigor, tactical creativity, and unyielding commitment to delivering exceptional value—and victories—when the future of the enterprise is at stake.

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#### Recent Jury Trials



**Seymour B. Everett III**  
Partner, Co-Founder

**Dolewski v. Dollar Tree Stores, Inc., et al.**  
Date/Venue: June 2025, Los Angeles Superior Court  
Jury Verdict: Hung Jury

**Kneeshaw, Carol Leigh, et al. v. City of Orange**  
Date/Venue: November 2024, Orange County Superior Court  
Jury Verdict: Defense

**Hausenbauer v. Maciejewski, et al.**  
Date/Venue: September 2024, Los Angeles Superior Court  
Jury Verdict: Defense



**Samantha E. Dorey**  
Partner, Co-Founder

Everett Dorey LLP is a full-service civil litigation firm of trial attorneys. Everett Dorey prides itself on its legal acumen, trial record, experience and its ability to put clients in the best position to succeed. Client objectives are tailored to individual needs, ranging from early resolution based on experienced evaluations to favorable jury verdicts with awards of attorneys' fees and expert costs.



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## 2025 TOP LITIGATORS & CORPORATE LAWYERS



**MARC J. SCHNEIDER**

STRADLING YOCCA CARLSON & RAUTH LLP

Marc J. Schneider is a securities and business litigation partner at Stradling and serves on its management committee. Schneider is a distinguished litigator and business advisor known for his innovative and pragmatic approach to resolving critical corporate governance challenges, shareholder litigation, and business disputes. With deep expertise in securities class actions, derivative suits, and merger and acquisition litigation, Schneider represents public and private companies, directors, officers, and private equity firms in navigating complex litigation in federal and state courts across the country. His impressive track record includes numerous trial victories in high stakes matters, including full defense wins in multiple matters with more than \$100 million in controversy. Through proactive advice, Schneider aims to prevent disputes altogether or, if litigation is inevitable, to put his clients in the best defense position possible. His clients include Orange County companies like Salas O'Brien, Foundation Building Materials, Primoris, and Kofax.

Schneider contributions to the Orange County legal and philanthropic communities have earned him accolades, including the Marcus J. Kaufman Jurisprudence Award, the Pegasus School Founders Award, and the Daniel R. Ginsberg Leadership Award. Schneider serves, for example, as board chair for both the Pegasus School and the Johns Hopkins University Center for Talented Youth, on the Executive Committee of the CEO Leadership Alliance, and on the board of Octane. Schneider has been selected by his peers repeatedly for Best Lawyers and as one of the Top 50 "Super Lawyers" in Orange County. He co-chairs the firm's securities litigation practice, which has been recognized by Legal500 since 2018.



**MARK SKAIST**

STRADLING YOCCA CARLSON & RAUTH LLP

Mark Skaist is a distinguished transactional lawyer renowned for his entrepreneurial clients throughout the various stages of a company's lifecycle. With a wealth of experience serving as general counsel to emerging companies, Skaist adeptly manages their daily legal needs while strategically positioning them for growth. His pivotal role encompasses guiding clients through complex issues related to company formation, funding rounds, and a broad array of strategic deals. Clients appreciate Skaist not only for his legal acumen but also for his significant, ongoing contribution to their success.

Skaist's diverse clientele spans multiple business models, each bringing unique challenges and opportunities. He has made a notable impact in the technology sector, assisting firms in the software and internet markets. His reputation extends further into consumer products, where he has established a solid track record in sectors such as food and beverage, hospitality, fashion, action sports, and skincare. Skaist is proficient in adapting to fluctuating business conditions and elevating companies, irrespective of their current stage, to new heights. Notably, over the last few years, Skaist has advised Restaurant365 in raising more than \$460 million in venture funding. Other clients include Herbivore Botanicals, Bachan's, and Okapi Venture Capital.

His comprehensive corporate practice encompasses transactional, financial, and emerging company work. Regularly collaborating with venture capital and private equity funds, Skaist provides valuable advice on corporate governance and employee compensation matters. His commitment to his clients and their growth solidifies his position as a key player in today's dynamic business landscape.



**MATTHEW J. STAUB**

ADAMS CORPORATE LAW

Matthew J. Staub is a senior associate at Adams Corporate Law, a boutique firm known for its focus on mergers and acquisitions. With a multidisciplinary background in law, accounting, and entrepreneurship, Staub brings a well-rounded perspective to the companies he advises—helping clients think strategically about growth, risk, and value at every stage of the business lifecycle.

Staub counsels privately held businesses across industries on M&A, private equity and financing transactions, corporate governance, shareholder and founder arrangements, real estate matters, and complex commercial contracts. He also advises on regulatory compliance and capital formation strategies.

Prior to joining the firm, Staub represented closely held companies and private investors across California in corporate, real estate, and transactional matters. His practical insight and tax-aware approach make him a key resource for clients seeking thoughtful legal solutions with long-term impact. Whether supporting day-to-day operations or guiding clients through a transformative transaction, Staub is committed to clarity, responsiveness, and results—hallmarks of the firm's reputation as lawyers who close deals.

Staub holds dual Bachelor of Science degrees in Accounting and Entrepreneurship from Indiana University's Kelley School of Business and his Juris Doctor with a specialization in Taxation from the University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law. He is licensed to practice law in California. Learn more about Matthew Staub's experience and how Adams Corporate Law can support your next business transaction by visiting [adamscorporatelaw.com](http://adamscorporatelaw.com).

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## 2025 TOP LITIGATORS &amp; CORPORATE LAWYERS

**JOHN STEPHENS**

FBFK LAW

John Stephens specializes in business trial law. During his 36-year legal career in Orange County, Stephens has developed a reputation for tenacious advocacy in the courtroom combined with a thoughtful, creative and pragmatic approach to problem solving. His clients receive strategic guidance customized to their unique circumstances.

Clients and colleagues appreciate John's responsiveness and resourcefulness. John's substantive experience in business owner disputes and matters involving real estate, breach of contract, fraud, and IP law equips him with the knowledge and background necessary to handle the most pressing legal issues encountered by a business owner.

Stephens has tried numerous cases to judgment, has taken and defended approximately one thousand depositions, and has negotiated hundreds of deals for clients. He does what it takes to achieve a positive outcome for his clients.

In addition to his law practice, Stephens is the mayor of Costa Mesa and has served as mayor or on city council since 2016. He has developed strong connections within all levels of government — municipal, county, state and federal. He is also a director on several local and regional boards, including the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) and the Transportation Corridor Agency (Toll Roads). John's vast network of private and public sector contacts provides his clients with valuable insights and options.

Whether in the courtroom or through his public service, John Stephens is dedicated to positively impacting his clients' business interests as well as the entire community. His commitment to justice and service inspires those around him.

**ALLYSON K. THOMPSON**

HART KIENLE PENTECOST

Allyson K. Thompson is a Partner at Hart Kienle Pentecost, is a powerhouse in employment litigation with over 20 years of experience representing and advising employers across California. A seasoned trial attorney, Thompson defends clients in a broad range of employment disputes, including discrimination, harassment, retaliation, whistleblower claims, wage and hour class actions, and trade secret matters, in both state and federal court. She routinely represents her clients at administrative proceedings before agencies such as the EEOC, DFEH, and DLSE. Known for her practical, solutions-driven approach, Thompson is a trusted advisor to companies navigating complex compliance issues and regulatory requirements. Her preventative counseling practice includes drafting and auditing multi-state employee handbooks, conducting internal investigations, advising on terminations and accommodations, and navigating clients through the interactive process with confidence and clarity.

Beyond the courtroom, Thompson is deeply engaged in the legal and business communities. She serves as a mandatory fee arbitrator and member of the Legislative Resolutions Committee for the Orange County Bar Association, where she helps shape policy and resolve disputes in the legal profession. As a frequent speaker for SCORE and other business organizations statewide, Thompson provides critical education to business owners and HR professionals on evolving employment laws and litigation avoidance. Recognized by the Los Angeles Daily Journal as one of the 2024 Women of Influence in Law, Thompson is widely respected for her courtroom presence, legal insight, and unwavering advocacy for employers. Her leadership and litigation expertise make her a standout among Orange County's top attorneys.

**PROUD USAHACHAROENPORN**

RUTAN &amp; TUCKER, LLP

Clients look to trial partner Proud Usahacharoenporn for advice when faced with business disputes, including disputes involving contracts, real property, fraud, business and intentional torts, unfair competition, and intellectual property. She counsels clients through the litigation process, with a focus on getting her clients the results they want while balancing their business concerns such as controlling costs and maintaining relationships. Her dedication to putting her client's needs first have led to the Southern California Super Lawyers naming her as a Rising Star for the past seven years in a row, and recently recognizing her as one of the top 25 up and coming attorneys in Orange County.

Usahacharoenporn is also actively engaged in community outreach and pro bono work. She has served on several local boards, most currently as a member of the Board of Directors of the Orange County Women Lawyers Association, and dedicates time to furthering the needs of the Southern California Asian American community. Through her pro bono work, Usahacharoenporn has also represented non-profit organizations, victims of domestic violence, and low-income tenants.

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**DANIEL WEISS**

REEVES WEISS LLP

Daniel Weiss represents businesses and individuals in high-stakes, complex litigation across a wide range of industries. His practice focuses on business litigation, crisis management, labor and employment, sports law, class actions, and white-collar defense. He has litigated in federal, state, and territorial courts nationwide, as well as before major arbitration bodies.

Known for his strategic thinking and practical approach, Weiss provides both zealous advocacy and sound counsel. He advises clients on risk management, reputational risk, and e-discovery, and has participated in nearly 20 trials, arbitrations, and administrative proceedings.

Weiss recently served as lead counsel for a real estate investment fund in an 11-day JAMS arbitration, defeating co-owners' attempts to seize control of a Newport Beach property. In his sports practice, he represents elite athletes, teams, and sponsors in key sponsorship and anti-doping disputes before U.S. arbitration panels and the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS).

Weiss has co-authored chapters on California's Consumers Legal Remedies Act and White Collar Criminal Law, and published in the ABA Litigation Journal, Daily Journal, and Law360.

Prior to co-founding Reeves & Weiss, he spent over 15 years at Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP in Los Angeles—part of The American Lawyer's Litigation Department of the Year multiple times—and later served as a senior attorney at Theodora Oringer PC.

**RYAN WILKINS**

STRADLING YOCCA CARLSON &amp; RAUTH LLP

Ryan Wilkins is a highly distinguished attorney who has played a pivotal role growing and advancing the interests of some of the firm's largest and most prominent clients, making him a trusted advisor in the industry. His expertise spans various aspects of corporate and securities law practice, including capital markets transactions, mergers and acquisitions, SEC reporting and compliance, and corporate governance. Wilkins' practice primarily focuses on the representation of public and private companies, investment banks, institutional investors, and high net-worth individuals. Key clients include Bird Global, CorVel, Deckers Outdoor, MARA, Sight Sciences and Tandem Diabetes.

Wilkins has led the firm's public company and investment banking clients through a multitude of corporate finance transactions, including initial public offerings, follow-on offerings, secondary offerings and private placements. He regularly advises clients in connection with structuring and negotiating complex merger, acquisition, divestiture and recapitalization transactions. He also has extensive experience navigating complex SEC compliance issues, stock exchange listing requirements, executive compensation matters, and corporate governance issues.

Before his successful legal career, Wilkins was a student-athlete at UCLA, where he earned three varsity letters in football. As a proud member of two PAC-10 championship teams, he was honored with the Jackie Robinson Memorial Award for Overall Excellence (2000). His athletic journey also led him to participate in the Rose Bowl (1999), Cotton Bowl (1998), and Sun Bowl (2000). Wilkins' competitive spirit and dedication, both on the field and in the boardroom, reflect his commitment to excellence in all endeavors.

Wilkins received his JD from the UCLA School of Law with a Corporate Law Specialization, and an MBA from the Anderson School at UCLA with an emphasis in Finance.