

# WOMEN of INFLUENCE in LAW 2024



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GOLDBERG & BAGLEY LLP



WOMEN of INFLUENCE in LAW 2024



**JAMIE ALTMAN BUGGY**  
*Partner & General Counsel*  
Harvest LLP

Jamie Altman Buggy is an extraordinary commercial real estate litigation attorney and serves as Harvest LLP's General Counsel and head of the firm's litigation department. She seeks to help her clients avoid disputes that could disrupt their business deals and threaten their larger objectives. Yet when litigation proves necessary, she is a fierce, unrelenting advocate and has no problem taking aggressive stances to obtain fair and favorable results for her clients. In addition to being a passionate and mindful advocate for her clients and their business goals, she steered Harvest through its startup phase and is her colleagues' go-to resource on topics including risk management, navigating new laws and ethical compliance. Jamie serves her community through charitable work including tenures on the boards of Home Start, which aims to strengthen families and prevent child abuse, and the Veterans Research Alliance, which raises money to fund innovative medical research for veterans.





**KELLY BAGLA, ESQ.**  
*Founder & CEO*  
Bagla Law Firm, APC

Kelly Bagla is an international award-winning corporate attorney and founder/CEO of Bagla Law, APC in San Diego, California. Bagla came to the U.S. as an immigrant seeking the American Dream. She has gone on to form her own law firm, establish multiple business enterprises and create the life of her dreams. Kelly has made it her mission to help other entrepreneurs reach their own success, not only through her legal practice, but also via her 6 books, (one of them a New York Times best seller), her online Do-It-Yourself legal forms company, her business coaching company, professional speaking, award-winning Podcast and media appearances. Awards include: Winner of Top 50 Women of Influence in Law; Winner of Top 100 leaders in Law; 2023 Winner, Global Law Experts, Business Law Firm of the Year, California; AI Acquisition International, Winner 2023; Leading Adviser Awards; 2020 Awards Winner, International Advisory Experts.





**KATIE BALATBAT**  
*Of Counsel*  
Witham Mahoney & Abbott, LLP

Katie Balatbat focuses her practice as Of Counsel at Witham Mahoney & Abbott LLP mostly on estate planning, real estate, taxation, and trust administration. She is a proud Torero alumna three times over from the University of San Diego, receiving her Bachelor's Degree in Accountancy, a Master of Science in Taxation, and finally a few years later, her Juris Doctorate from the School of Law. After finishing her law degree and passing the California Bar Exam, Katie continued her studies in the areas of tax and estate planning in Washington D.C., pursuing a Masters of Laws LL.M. degree at Georgetown University Law Center. In between graduate school and law school, Katie worked in Los Angeles at one of the "Big Four" accounting firms preparing tax returns for a variety of clients, including large C-corporations, pass-through entities, high net worth individuals, and complex trusts. She is a licensed Certified Public Accountant in California.





**TERESA BECK**  
*Managing Shareholder*  
Klinedinst PC

Teresa Beck is an inspiring and passionate advocate for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) initiatives. At Klinedinst, she represents a wide array of clients involved in litigation. She also co-chairs the firm's DEIB committee, and was instrumental in helping the firm achieve Mid-Size Mansfield Certification from Diversity Lab. She is the Immediate Past President of the National Conference of Women's Bar Associations (NCWBA), where she co-created a national program designed to engage male leadership in the establishment of DEIB initiatives. This year, she launched the NCWBA DEIB Toolkit, designed to help member organizations increase their engagement with various groups, particularly women of color. She is also a frequent speaker on legal and diversity-related topics. In recognition of her accomplishments, Lawyers Club of San Diego honored Ms. Beck with the prestigious Belva Lockwood Award in 2014.





**ARIEL BEDELL**  
*Shareholder*  
Loftin | Bedell, P.C.

Ariel Bedell, a shareholder with Loftin|Bedell, P.C., has more than 20 years of experience in commercial real estate law. Ariel advises clients on the ownership, operation, leasing, purchasing and sale of real estate. Drawing from an in-depth understanding of business and real estate transactional needs, Ariel guides clients including mobile home park owners, homeowners' associations and real estate developers, to practical legal solutions. Of note, she has negotiated hotel leases on behalf of property owners totaling \$92 million in revenue. She has also completed over 500 mobile home park tenant evictions. A decade-long member of CREW San Diego, Ariel served on its Board of Directors for five years and as president in 2020. She's also served on boards for various San Diego-based nonprofits. Ariel earned a bachelor's degree in biology from San Diego State University and a law degree from the University of San Diego School of Law.





**NADIA BERMUDEZ**  
*Principal*  
Meyers Nave

Nadia Bermudez, a Principal in Meyers Nave's Labor and Employment Practice Group, demonstrates a deep commitment to justice and client interests. She litigates and provides counsel in employment law, navigating complex regulations with proficiency and a genuine commitment to achieving fair outcomes. Known for her effective courtroom presence and proactive compliance strategies, Nadia ensures robust protection for her clients against legal challenges. Her practice includes training in harassment prevention, diversity, and disability law, aiming to mitigate workplace issues before they escalate. Nadia also conducts workplace investigations highlighting her comprehensive approach to fostering respectful work environments. Her leadership is recognized widely, and her dedication to promoting justice, equality, and client-focused service aligns with Meyers Nave's commitment to excellence and diversity.





**KIMBERLY BLAKE**  
*Partner*  
Gordon Rees Scully Mansukhani, LLP

Kimberly Blake, a distinguished Partner in GRSM's San Diego office, is a woman of influence in the legal field. Specializing in construction, environmental, and product liability law, Kimberly's legal acumen was recognized when Martindale-Hubbell recognized her as an AV Preeminent Top-Rated Lawyer and Judicial Rating for Legal Ability and Ethical Standards. According to San Diego Magazine, Kimberly was also a Top Lawyer in San Diego from 2014 to 2024. Kimberly is dedicated to fostering a collaborative and supportive professional environment. Her leadership from 2008 to 2013 as the Partner Supervisor for the Summer Associates and liaison between the partnership and the San Diego Associate Committee highlights her commitment to mentoring and professional development. Kimberly's expertise lies in defending developers, design professionals, and contractors in public and private works. She also provides counsel on construction contracts and negotiations.





**TAYLOR BLOOM**  
*Partner*  
BakerHostetler

Taylor Bloom has significant experience operating at the intersection of law, technology and business, with a keen focus on US data privacy and governance. A certified privacy professional (CIPP/E, CIPP/US and CIPM) and the former in-house counsel at an advertising technology company, Taylor's diverse strengths include coordinating and leading the implementation of privacy programs; advising on compliance issues, negotiating agreements with vendors and business partners; and maintaining a deep knowledge of the advertising technology ecosystem and related privacy issues. Taylor specializes in advising clients on the nuances of the various US state privacy laws and how to navigate opt out requirements and consumer request responses. Taylor is a member of the executive committee for the California Lawyers Association Privacy Law Section and also the chair of the Ad Tech Sub-committee.





**CHRISTINE BOISCLAIR ESQ**  
*Shareholder*  
Pettit Kohn Ingrassia Lutz & Dolin

Christine Boisclair is a Shareholder in the San Diego office of Pettit Kohn Ingrassia Lutz & Dolin's retail litigation team. Christine represents Fortune 500 companies in product liability, toxic tort, and trucking litigation. Christine's notable accomplishments include trying a products liability/negligence case which resulted in a non-suit victory for her client. Christine has been recognized to the San Diego Super Lawyers Rising Star award since 2020 and the Best Lawyers: Ones to Watch from 2022. Christine also served on the Board of Directors for the San Diego Defense Lawyers organization. Christine received her Juris Doctor from Southwestern Law School where she was a Dean's Merit Scholarship recipient.





**BARBARA BORDEN**  
*Partner*  
Cooley

Barbara Borden is a distinguished leader in the life sciences, healthcare and technology industries. Ranked by DealPointData as the 13th most active dealmaker of all time for publicly disclosed deals, Barbara is recognized as an unparalleled M&A leader. As one of the first and only women co-leading an Am Law firm's mergers and acquisitions practice, Barbara serves as a mentor and role model to many. She has orchestrated numerous high-profile deals and cultivated enduring relationships with clients through strategic counsel, some spanning 25+ years. Barbara played a pivotal role in advising Horizon Pharma plc through its inversion and numerous acquisitions – notably, guiding it through its historic sale to Amgen, the largest healthcare deal of 2022 – and leading Cooley's team in advising Turning Point Therapeutics on its sale to Bristol Myers Squibb. Outside of her legal practice, Barbara serves as a board member of PAWS of Coronado, a nonprofit animal shelter.





# CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR WOMEN OF INFLUENCE IN LAW 2024 HONOREES

Barnes & Thornburg congratulates its own **Allison Rego** and **Haley Fiallo** for being recognized as Women of Influence in Law for 2024. This prestigious honor celebrates their dedication and outstanding contributions to the legal profession and their community.



**ALLISON REGO**



**HALEY FIALLO**

 **BARNES &  
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# WOMEN of INFLUENCE in LAW 2024



**CAROLINA BRAVO-KARIMI**  
Managing Partner  
Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati

Carolina Bravo-Karimi is a managing partner of Wilson Turner Kosmo LLP and a member of the firm's Employment Law group. Her practice focuses on representing employers in a variety of employment disputes, including wrongful termination, discrimination, harassment, retaliation and wage and hour litigation. Carolina serves as Practice Chair of the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Practice Group at the firm, and assists employers of all sizes in the creation, implementation, and management of their DE&I efforts. She provides implicit bias, microaggression, equal pay, and anti-harassment training. Carolina, who earned her law degree at University of San Diego School of Law, has served as the Faculty Advisor for the Executive Moot Court Board and an Adjunct Professor there. Among several recognitions, she has been named in The Best Lawyers in America® for Employment Law – Management, the San Diego Super Lawyers list, and Winner, SDBJ's Business Woman of the Year - Medium Company.

WILSON TURNER KOSMO  
LLP



**SARAH BRITE EVANS**  
Partner  
Higgs Fletcher & Mack

Sarah Brite Evans is a known force in San Diego's legal community. With a practice focused on business litigation and employment law, Sarah helps employers avert potential problems, and when problems are unavoidable, she helps them find a favorable resolution. Her litigation work includes defending individual and class/representative lawsuits and claims involving employment and wage issues. She is highly engaged in our local community, having held leadership roles in organizations including Lawyers Club of San Diego, Border View Family YMCA, and Crawford High School Law Academy. In 2019, Sarah was named California's 40th Senate District's Woman of the Year for this work. For the past few years, Sarah has devoted her civic efforts to leadership and operational roles to Forever Balboa Park. Sarah served as its first co-chair and leads its diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility working group, while also maintaining a full time legal practice and raising two teenagers.

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**JANICE BROWN**  
Principal  
Meyers Nave

Janice Brown chairs Meyers Nave's Labor and Employment Practice and Workplace Investigations Practice. With 40 years of experience in state and federal courts, she began her career at the U.S. Justice Department, earning "Outstanding Trial Attorney" and "Trial Lawyer of the Year" awards. Janice founded Brown Law Group, a respected woman and minority-owned firm in San Diego, serving local and Fortune 50 companies. A trusted advisor and mentor, Janice is known for her contributions to diversity in the legal field. She offers comprehensive employment law services, including counseling, training, internal investigations, and litigation. Her strategic insight helps clients minimize disruptions with practical, cost-effective solutions. Janice's community engagement and media presence underscore her commitment to professional and economic development.

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**TARA BURD**  
Shareholder  
Klinedinst PC

Tara Burd is a Shareholder and Certified Specialist in Estate Planning, Trust & Probate Law by The State Bar of California Board of Legal Specialization. In 2024, Ms. Burd was named Chair of California Lawyers Association (CLA), the largest statewide voluntary bar association serving thousands of licensed attorneys. As Chair, she has major influence on California's legal community, advocating on behalf of members before the Legislature, the Judiciary, the Executive Branch, and the State Bar of California. Previously, she led CLA's Real Property Law section as Chair, and has served as Chair of The State Bar of California's Access Through Innovation of Legal Services (ATILS) Task Force. Within San Diego, Ms. Burd has served led the Irish-American Bar Association, and is incredibly active in the local legal community. She is a recipient of the prestigious AV Preeminent Peer Review rating by Martindale-Hubbell and received the Reisman Award by Clio.

Klinedinst  
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**JOANNE BUSER**  
Partner  
Paul Plevin Quarles

Joanne Buser is a Labor & Employment partner at Paul Plevin Quarles. Her practice includes employment law counseling and litigation, investigations of employee complaints and higher education litigation involving students. Joanne recently prevailed on an appeal, resulting in a published decision that limited a person's right to seek attorney's fees in a private dispute under California's private attorneys' general doctrine. She successfully obtained an anti-SLAPP dismissal and motion to dismiss a complaint in federal court targeting faculty speech, obtaining a significant attorney's fees award for a public university. Joanne is a sought-after public speaker, including at the annual conference for the California Public Employers Labor Relations Association. She served on the board of directors for Partnerships with Industry, a nonprofit organization that provided employment opportunities for San Diegans with disabilities. Joanne chairs the office's summer associate program.

Paul Plevin  
Quarles



**JOHANNA CANLAS**  
Partner  
Burke, Williams & Sorensen, LLP

Johanna N. Canlas is a partner in the San Diego office of Burke, Williams & Sorensen LLP. Johanna has 23 years of public agency law experience and serves as City Attorney for Coronado and Solana Beach. She is also the General Counsel for Clean Energy Alliance and SBCS Corporation. She leads the Burke team that provides special counsel services to other municipalities in San Diego County. Johanna advises clients in all matters affecting public agency and non-profit governance: from day-to-day operational decisions to long-term policy implementation. These include land use, environmental and regulatory compliance, intergovernmental relations, labor and employment, claims avoidance, and litigation. A proven effective advocate, Johanna represents clients before regional, state, and federal agencies. While Johanna provides constructive and practical legal advice, she will vigorously defend clients when needed.

burke  
BURKE, WILLIAMS & SORESEN, LLP



**KASSANDRA CASTILLO**  
Partner  
Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati

The first person of color to become partner in Wilson Sonsini's San Diego corporate group, Kassandra helps life sciences innovators and investors bring cutting-edge therapeutics to market. With experience encompassing venture financings and acquisitions, Kassandra has advised: Asset manager Novo Holdings as lead investor in 15+ multimillion-dollar transactions, including a \$103 million financing of Reunion Neuroscience, which is developing therapies for women suffering from postpartum depression; Ophthalmic therapeutics company SpyGlass Pharma on its \$90 million series C financing; and Emerging San Diego company Tempo Therapeutics on its \$12 million series A financing. Kassandra joined Wilson Sonsini after graduating from the USD Law School. She is involved with Women of Wilson and spent two years as co-chair of the 1,000-plus-lawyer firm's associates committee. A passionate advocate of diversity, she is a leader within Athena, an organization that empowers women in STEM.

WILSON  
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**KRISTEN CAVERLY**  
Partner  
Henderson Caverly & Pum LLP

Kristen E. Caverly, founding partner at Henderson, Caverly & Pum LLP, chairs the Estate & Trust Litigation Group. Specializing in estate and trust controversies, civil litigation, and business disputes, she offers comprehensive advice and representation, boasting significant trial experience with notable successes. Caverly is a Fellow of the American College of Trust and Estate Counsel and a Certified Specialist in Estate Planning, Trust, and Probate Law by the State Bar of California. Caverly is currently serving as Chair of the California Lawyers Association, Trusts & Estates Executive Committee. Recognized by The Best Lawyers in America® and Super Lawyers®, she is esteemed within legal circles for her expertise. Caverly co-authored legislative updates and articles, and regularly lectures on estate administration and litigation topics. Caverly is admitted to practice before the U.S. Supreme Court and California state courts.

Henderson  
Caverly Pum LLP



**VAAINI CHAWLA**  
Partner  
Berner Chawla PLLC

Vaani Chawla has represented corporations and individuals in a wide range of immigration matters for 30 years. In 2019, as president of the South Asian Bar Association of San Diego, she raised awareness about hate crimes targeting Sikh Americans and met with U.S. Senate staff to advocate for legislation to protect immigrants. As a past board member of Lawyers Club of San Diego, Ms. Chawla vetted and advocated in favor of legislation to protect women's rights and wrote numerous articles about the law. Currently, she is the Advisory Board Chair for the South Asian Bar Association of San Diego, a board member of Women of Color in the Law, and District 9 Governor for California Women Lawyers. She is co-editor of San Diego Lawyer magazine and a co-founder of the San Diego Unity Bar. She also volunteers to serve as a judge pro tem.

BERNER  
CHAWLA



**DANNA COTMAN**  
Attorney  
ARC IP Law, PC

Ms. Cotman, as an entrepreneur, owner and president of ARC IP Law, PC, brings a broad range of education and experience to the table. Her professional hands-on approach incorporates each client's unique needs and perspective into her evaluation and assessment of what is necessary to build and protect a successful business and intellectual property portfolio. Over her decades as a lawyer, she has gained broad experience in many different areas of law. Her clients span a vast array of industries from medical device companies, service organizations, consumer products to fashion, and range from startups to well established entities. Partnering with clients on a wide variety of intellectual property matters, she counsels clients with the mindset to find an elegant solution to the issue at hand whether it's the IP portfolio or trademark, copyright, patent, or business disputes. Ms. Cotman enhances the value of her client's IP through creative and intentional strategies.

ARC  
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY LAW



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**WOMEN OF INFLUENCE IN LAW  
AWARD WINNER**

**JENNIFER OLIVER**

**COUNSEL, LITIGATION**



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# WOMEN of INFLUENCE in LAW 2024



## KRISTINE CUSTODIO SUERO

Senior Paralegal / Business Development Director  
Butterfield Schechter LLP

**K**ristine Custodio Suero, ACP is an award-winning legal professional, a published author and a highly sought after speaker. A true servant leader, she has led the San Diego Paralegal Association and California Alliance of Paralegal Associations as President. Kristine teaches legal courses for local San Diego paralegal programs and lends her time to one of the program's advisory boards. Kristine serves on the NALA – The Paralegal Association Board of Directors as the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee Chair. Kristine serves as a member of the Center for Judicial Education and Research Advisory Committee, appointed by former California Supreme Court Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye. She also serves as a Vice Chair/Commissioner for the County of San Diego Commission on the Status of Women and Girls. Kristine is a Senior Paralegal/Business Development Director for Butterfield Schechter LLP.



## SUSANNE DE LA FLOR

Senior Account Executive  
Express Network/Express Deposition Services

**A**n award-winning account executive with Express Network/Express Deposition Services, Susanne de la Flor combines her backgrounds in makeup artistry, sales, and law to provide tailor-made court reporting and other litigation-support services to law firms throughout San Diego County. Her company does everything from file to trial, and Susanne strives for 100 percent client satisfaction. A highly active member of the community, Susanne is a member of multiple local legal organizations, and she attends nearly all of their events. A firm believer in community service and giving back, Susanne launched a legal community blood drive, and she saved 3,600 lives and collected 1,221 pints of blood during her 14 years working on the annual event. She continues to donate blood herself multiple times per year. Her other causes include AED advocacy and placement, women's cardiac health, epidermolysis bullosa, Father Joe's Villages, Habitat for Humanity, Dress For Success, and the Humane Society.

Express Deposition Services  
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## CHANDARA DIEP

Of Counsel  
RJS LAW

**C**handara Diep is Of Counsel for RJS LAW, the firm's first hire, contributing to its growth into a full-service law firm. She manages tax collection cases with the IRS, FTB, CDTFA, and EDD. Ms. Diep holds a paralegal certificate from the University of San Diego and trained at a local law firm researching corporate tax laws. At RJS LAW, she handled case management and assisted with numerous civil tax controversy cases, including audits and penalty abatements. As a counsel, she manages high-dollar tax cases and criminal tax issues for large businesses. Ms. Diep earned her Master of Law in Taxation from the University of San Diego School of Law, working with the Federal Income Tax Clinic to aid low-income individuals. She obtained her Juris Doctorate from California Western School of Law, focusing on tax controversy and corporate law, and was an honor roll student. She also holds an undergraduate degree in Political Science and Law and Society from UC San Diego.



## YASMINE DJAWADIAN

Founder  
Queen Yasmine

**H**er motto: no matter how big the adversary is, anything is possible if there is passion, care, and conviction. Her unwavering focus? To give voice and power to those that cannot fight for themselves. Soon after earning her B.A. in Political Science from UC San Diego and her J.D. from California Western School of Law, Yasmine entered that fast-paced world of personal injury law. With fierce determination, conviction, and a passion for justice, she has recovered more than \$1 billion in settlements and verdicts since founding her firm 13 years ago. Focusing her practice on serious personal injury cases, including motor vehicle and premises liability cases, she consistently treats clients with care and compassion – forming personal relationships to better understand their story and fight for justice.



## MEGAN DONOHUE

Partner  
Cooley

**C**ooley partner Megan Donohue is an experienced litigator, and has successfully defended numerous class actions, advertising challenges, and complex commercial disputes in federal and California state courts. Megan counsels clients on advertising claims and their substantiation to help avoid litigation as they grow their business. Notably, Megan represented Chicago Title Company against claims involving the largest ponzi scheme in San Diego history, obtaining a Bar Order preventing further claims against the company, represented Facebook in numerous class action victories, defended Dollar Shave Club's breakthrough internet ads, represented the children and estate of Junior Seau in a lawsuit against the NFL, and obtained a unanimous jury verdict in favor of prominent business leader and philanthropist Ernest Rady. Megan is a current member and past President of the USD School of Law, Law Alumni Board and serves as a Lawyer Representative for the Southern District of California.



## MARY DOWLING

Managing Attorney  
Tovella Dowling, PC

**M**ary Dowling is the founder and Managing Attorney of Tovella Dowling, PC, a law firm specializing in the legal representation of tax exempt organizations. As a driven and career-focused individual, who also believes in the importance of family first, Ms. Dowling was frustrated with the imperfect solutions for women who have a dueling passion for both family and profession and refused to accept that one had to take a backseat to the other. This motivation was the fuel behind the start of Tovella Dowling, PC which maintains for its employees a fully subsidized onsite childcare facility in its downtown San Diego office, lending support and fostering a "village" for those employees navigating the rewarding but challenging feat faced by the everyday working parent. Leading by example, it her hope that this innovative model for law firms will one day be the norm, rather than the rarity.



## SHADEE DUARTE

Sr. Associate Attorney  
G10 Law, APLC

**S**hadee Duarte is a senior associate attorney in the Litigation Team at G10 Law. With ten years of legal experience, Ms. Duarte's area of practice includes civil and real estate litigation, with a niche in Mobilehome Residency Law. Prior to her practice in civil litigation, Ms. Duarte was an associate attorney for Stepp Law Corporation, where she practiced in corporate securities and business law. While pursuing her studies, Ms. Duarte also worked for a member of congress in Washington D.C. where she assisted in researching, analyzing, and drafting proposed legislation. Ms. Duarte obtained her Juris Doctorate from Western State College of Law, graduating with Scholastic Merit and a certificated study in business law. She graduated with a B.A. from the University of California at Irvine, Deans Honor List. Beyond the legal realm, Ms. Duarte actively supports missions in Mexico and Ecuador with a focus on children and orphanages.



## CHERYL DUNN SOTO

Partner  
Franklin Soto Leeds LLP

**C**heryl Dunn Soto has focused on representing commercial policyholders against insurers for more than 15 years and has significant experience with a variety of commercial liability policies. Besides litigating coverage disputes, she frequently assists in resolving complex coverage issues pre-suit. Cheryl is a past Chair of the Insurance/Bad Faith Law Section of the San Diego County Bar Association (SDCBA) and often speaks on insurance topics. She is on the Board of Governors of the Association of Business Trial Lawyers San Diego and the Board of the Irish American Bar Association of San Diego. She has also been a member of the SDCBA Awards Committee since 2021. Cheryl has been selected to the San Diego Super Lawyers List (Insurance Coverage) since 2019, to the 2023 and 2024 Super Lawyers San Diego Top 50 List and Top 25 Women List, and to the Best Lawyers in America (San Diego) List since 2022.



## ALEXANDRA EAKER PEREZ

Shareholder  
Eaker Perez Law

**A**lexandra Eaker Pérez is an award-winning tax trial lawyer and founder of Eaker Pérez Law, a tax controversy firm. Nationally and locally recognized by Super Lawyers, San Diego Business Journal, and The Daily Transcript, Alexandra is celebrated for her mastery in tax litigation. She is frequently featured in leading publications such as Tax Notes Today and the San Diego Union Tribune and is a prominent speaker at major conferences for the American Bar Association, U.S. Treasury, and IRS. Alexandra has addressed six congressional committees on tax law changes and published numerous articles on taxation and tax policy. She serves on the board of #AfghanEvac and has held leadership roles with Culture Shock Dance Troupe, State Bar of California Taxation Section, and First United Methodist Church. Alexandra holds a Master of Science in Financial Planning, Doctor of Jurisprudence, and LL.M. in Taxation.



## CATHERINE EDMONDS

Founding Attorney  
Edmonds Legal, PC

**C**atherine Edmonds is the founding attorney of Edmonds Legal, PC, leading one of the very few boutique corporate transactional law firms in San Diego with a specialty in mergers and acquisitions. In this way, she is a trailblazer. Over the course of her 16-year legal career she has worked as a corporate transactional attorney at large law firms and in-house. She relocated to San Diego and opened her law firm in October 2019. She is a member of the San Diego County Bar Association and the San Diego Entrepreneurs Exchange. She is active in the San Diego entrepreneurial and angel investing communities. She prides herself on offering the same high quality legal services that would be found at a large law firm in a friendly, individualized, educational and client centric approach. She enjoys educating business owners and founders on corporate law and mergers and acquisitions transactions.







Congratulations to  
**Barbara Borden,**  
**Alexis Finkelberg Bortniker,**  
**Megan Donohue** and  
**Charity Williams** for being  
recognized on San Diego  
Business Journal’s 2024  
Women of Influence  
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WOMEN of INFLUENCE in

LAW

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**HALEY FIALLO**  
Associate  
Barnes & Thornburg LLP

Haley Fiallo calls upon her knowledge and skills from her time with a global retail brand and a legal technology company to help clients navigate complex business transactions, financings and negotiations. Haley is able to see the big picture while navigating the little details, assessing potential legal issues and collaborating to find appropriate resolutions. She regularly counsels clients – including lenders, commercial banks, and borrowers – regarding financing transactions, as well as venture capital and real estate investments and contracts. Most recently, Haley closed a unique deal with a healthcare capital company, marking the first time the organization utilized a co-lender deal with an outside fund. She also engaged in a pro bono case for a local nonprofit, helping to expunge records for victims of human trafficking. In addition to her legal practice, Haley is involved with Youth Assistance Coalition’s monthly meal delivery.



**ALEXIS FINKELBERG BORTNIKER**  
Partner  
Cooley

Cooley partner Alexis Bortniker is passionate about mentoring and empowering young women and increasing health equity and access in the US. In her legal practice, she advises digital health companies, healthcare providers, entrepreneurs, investors and technology companies on emerging issues in the healthcare industry. She also assists clients in navigating the complex healthcare regulatory and transactions landscape – including joint ventures, regulatory considerations and payment structures. Alexis utilizes her extensive knowledge of the healthcare space to guide digital health providers through compliance issues, corporate practice considerations and product rollouts. She has demonstrated an ongoing commitment to counseling healthcare clients in all 50 states on regulatory compliance and business structuring, especially concerning digital health and health tech. Outside of her practice, Alexis is deeply engaged with the San Diego Jewish community.



**SHANNON FINLEY ESQ**  
Shareholder  
Pettit Kohn Ingrassia Lutz & Dolin

Shannon R. Finley is a Shareholder in the San Diego office and serves as the co-founder and co-chair of the firm’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee. She focuses her practice on employment and labor law. As a skilled litigator, she represents California employers in disputes ranging from single plaintiff wrongful termination cases to complex class actions. In addition, Ms. Finley provides guidance to employers advising on best practices to avoid lawsuits before they arise. Ms. Finley is a speaker and author on issues including best hiring practices, wage and hour law, discrimination, leaves of absence, and social media. Ms. Finley is a team leader in the J. Clifford Wallace Inn of Court; Chair for the Labor & Employment Executive Committee of the San Diego County Bar Association; and is the past President of Lawyers Club of San Diego. She also served as Affiliate Governor on the California Women Lawyers board.



**STACY FODE**  
Partner  
Nukk-Freeman & Cera

Stacy Fode has been a driving force in empowering women in the legal profession for over two decades and is a champion for diversity and inclusion locally and on the national stage. Stacy is the Managing Partner of Nukk-Freeman & Cera’s San Diego office, and has a thriving employment litigation practice, where she represents and counsels large national employers, including Fortune 500 companies, in all areas of employment law. She serves as General Counsel for the National Association of Minority and Women-Owned Law Firms (NAMWOLF), an organization aiming to “promote diversity in the legal profession by fostering successful relationships among preeminent minority and women-owned law firms and private/public entities.” Stacy served as the first-ever Chair of the Association of Defense Trial Attorneys’ Women of ADTA Committee, President of Lawyers Club of San Diego, on the Board of the San Diego County Bar Associations, and in a variety of other leadership roles.



**REBECCA FORTUNE**  
Shareholder  
Buchalter

With over 20 years’ experience as a trial lawyer, Rebecca Fortune, Shareholder and Co-Chair of the Litigation Practice Group in the Firm’s San Diego office, is an accomplished trial attorney specializing in civil litigation, with expertise in real estate, business, and probate matters. Known for her strategic use of technology throughout the litigation process, she consistently delivers favorable outcomes for her clients. Notably, San Diego Superior Court Judge Timothy Taylor praised her focus and effectiveness, particularly in her use of trial presentation technology, enhancing a jury’s ability to understand otherwise complex business and real estate disputes. She represents clients in corporate and partnership disputes (including derivative actions), unfair competition claims, contract disputes, real estate transfer and non-disclosure actions, state and federal fair housing and discrimination claims, commercial lease disputes, and commercial and residential easement/boundary disputes.



Congratulations!



**Rebecca Fortune**  
SHAREHOLDER



**Laura Nichols**  
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**JENN FRENCH**  
Partner  
Lynch Carpenter, LLP

Jenn French is a partner at Lynch Carpenter, LLP where she represents plaintiffs in complex class action litigation involving privacy, employee wage and hour, and consumer protection. She also serves as court-appointed counsel for criminal appeals. Jenn volunteers as pro bono counsel through Casa Cornelia Law Center, the San Diego Volunteer Lawyer Program, and the Southern District of California's Pro Bono Panel. She has donated hundreds of hours serving vulnerable populations, and in recognition of these efforts, California Senate President pro Tempore Emeritus Toni G. Atkins recognized Jenn as one of the 2023 Women of the 39th District. Jenn has been chosen by her peers as a Super Lawyer since 2022 and is a multi-year recipient of the Wiley W. Manuel Certificate for Pro Bono Legal Services. She is passionate about increasing access to justice and giving back to her community and is a volunteer leader in numerous bar organizations.





**SAIGE GALLOP**  
Associate Attorney  
Foley & Lardner LLP

Saige exemplifies excellence, dedication, and leadership within the legal profession, particularly in the fields of Corporate Transactions, Cybersecurity, and Privacy. She consistently showcases her unparalleled commitment and prowess in her work, demonstrating exceptional legal acumen and strategic insight in representing a diverse clientele that includes investors and emerging technology companies. One of Saige's most commendable attributes is her unwavering dedication to advancing racial justice and equity within the legal sphere. Serving as the San Diego office liaison for Foley's Racial Justice and Equity Pro Bono Practice Group, she has been instrumental in driving meaningful change and advocating for underrepresented communities. Through her proactive involvement, Saige contributed to the firm's pro bono efforts and inspired her colleagues to actively engage in initiatives to foster inclusivity and diversity.





**MIKHAK GHORBAN**  
Principal / Owner  
Ghorban Law, APC

Mikhak Ghorban is the founder of Ghorban Law, APC, representing individuals and families in a wide range of immigration matters. As the first Iranian-American member of the Board of Lawyers Club, she is the President-Elect of the organization beginning July 2024. Throughout her career, Mikhak has been involved in organizations aimed at promoting diversity and gender equality. She is a very active member of the Diversity Equity and Inclusion Division of San Diego County Bar Association (SDCBA) and was appointed as co-chair of the Affinity Bar Outreach Group. Mikhak is on the advisory board of the Iranian American Bar Association- San Diego (IABA-SD) and in 2023, honored with their Community Impact Award for her dedication to community service. She served two years as the Affiliate Governor for California Women Lawyers. As a co-founder of the San Diego Unity Bar, she also co-chaired its inaugural event.





**DAWN HALL CUNNEEN**  
Partner  
Cunneen Booth LLP

Dawn Hall Cunneen has over 30 years of experience representing clients in estate planning, estate and gift taxation, family succession planning, post-death trust and probate administrations, and trust estate and probate estate litigation. When counseling clients on estate planning issues, Ms. Cunneen employs a collaborative approach and works closely with the client, the client's financial advisors, and accountants to develop a customized, practical estate plan. Employing a strategic team-driven approach ensures all aspects of the client's financial and family circumstances are taken into account in the most economic and productive manner. Ms. Cunneen has significant experience working with complex family dynamics, high concentrations of commercial real estate, and unique assets. Ms. Cunneen uses her extensive litigation experience to identify potential issues and create a strategy for avoiding litigation as she counsels and advises individuals in their estate planning.





**JENNIFER HAMILTON**  
Partner  
Lagasse Branch Bell + Kinkead

Ms. Hamilton is a partner in the Tort and Professional Liability Practice Groups. Ms. Hamilton specializes in the areas of construction, professional liability and general civil litigation. Ms. Hamilton represents design professionals in a variety of actions arising from the design and construction of all types of structures, including mixed-use high-rises, commercial buildings, public facilities, and mass residential developments. She also represents real estate professionals, including real estate brokers and agents, mortgage brokers and escrow agents, related to the purchase and sale of residential and commercial buildings. Ms. Hamilton is currently a barrister in the Welsh Inn of Court. In addition, Ms. Hamilton provides pro bono legal services to the Eastern District of California Pro Bono Panel for Civil Rights. Prior to attending law school, Ms. Hamilton worked at a school for at-risk youths where she taught a marine science curriculum.





Congratulations to our partners Priya Huggett, Ann Maas and Amelia Sanchez for their recognition as Woman of Influence in Law!

Committed to the CGS3 mission of delivering a best-in-class client experience, Priya, Ann and Amelia set the bar for their peers. Talented deal-oriented attorneys with expertise in complex transactional commercial real estate and corporate matters, each is well deserving of this recognition by the San Diego Business Journal – we are very proud of the role they play with the CGS3 team!

Visit us at [cgs3.com](https://cgs3.com) to learn more.



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# Recognizing Success

Foley is proud to congratulate our colleague, **Saige Gallop** on being honored for the *San Diego Business Journal* Women of Influence in Law.



For more information about Foley, please contact:  
Saige Gallop | San Diego | [sgallop@foley.com](mailto:sgallop@foley.com)

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FOLEY & LARDNER LLP



WOMEN of INFLUENCE in LAW 2024



**SUSAN HAWKS MCCLINTIC**  
Shareholder, VP, Transactional  
Department Chair  
Epsten, APC

Susan M. Hawks McClintic is known for giving practical, common sense advice without the legalese. Sue joined Epsten, APC, in October 1990 and became a shareholder in 1999. She has supervised the firm's transactional law department since 2008, became a co-managing shareholder in August 2014 and was named managing shareholder of the firm in September 2021. Sue graduated from the University of Notre Dame Law School and grew up in Nebraska. Sue is active in the Community Association Institute (CAI) on the local and national level. For CAI National, Sue serves on the Board of Directors for the CAI Foundation for Community Association Research, is a member of the CAI Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee, including working on a committee to develop an M400 course, and is a past member of the CAI Case Law Review Committee. Sue also serves as a CAI San Diego Treasurer, serves on the CAI San Diego Education Committee, and has served in the CACM committee.





**NANCY HENDERSON**  
Partner  
Henderson Caverly & Pum  
LLP

Nancy G. Henderson, a founding and managing partner at Henderson, Caverly & Pum LLP, leads the Estate Planning Group and contributes to the Trust Administration & Probate Group. She's a Fellow of the American College of Trust and Estate Counsel (ACTEC), served on the Program Committee, and was a member of the California State Bar Estate Planning Law Advisory Commission. Recognized in Southern California Super Lawyers and Worth Magazine's Top 100 Attorneys, she's been honored by The Best Lawyers in America® since 2018, receiving Lawyer of the Year awards. Nancy earned her law degree from UC Berkeley and her bachelor's from Duke University. An esteemed speaker and writer on estate planning, taxation, and charitable planning, she's presented for prestigious organizations nationwide, addressing topics like family entities, trust administration, and estate preservation. Nancy co-chaired ALI-CLE's Estate Planning in Depth program for seven years.





**PATRICIA HOLLENBECK**  
Partner  
Duane Morris LLP

A tenacious advocate and strategic decision maker, Patty's law practice focuses on complex business litigation and arbitration. Named to Best Lawyers in America, A-V rated by Martindale, selected to Super Lawyers (Business Litigation) since 2011, and frequently named to the Top 25 Women and Top 50 Lawyers lists. Patty has a long history of serving the San Diego legal community. She is a past-president and programs chair of the San Diego Inn of Court, which teaches trial skills. She is a Master (and ExComm member) in the Welsh American Inn of Court, an organization focused on civility and professionalism, and she is past president of Lawyers Club, dedicated to advancing the status of women in law and society. She has also served as a board member for the Tom Hermann LGBTQ+ Bar Association, the San Diego Downtown Partnership, the San Diego County Bar Association, and the Association of Business Trial Lawyers.





**EMMA HORNER**  
Senior Counsel  
Gordon Rees Scully  
Mansukhani, LLP

Emma Rene Horner, a seasoned Senior Counsel, holds a pivotal role in GRSM's San Diego office. She is a key member of the Employment Law practice group, bringing her extensive experience and expertise to the table. Emma focuses her practice on employment and labor disputes, including wrongful termination, discrimination, retaliation, breach of contract, and wage and hour (particularly class action and PAGA) matters. Her expertise is not confined to litigation; she also extends invaluable advice to employers and companies on various employment matters and spends time working with and mentoring law clerks, as she has developed GRSM's law clerk program. A stellar academic background and a wealth of professional accomplishments mark Emma's journey to becoming a leading figure in her field. After graduating with top honors from law school, Emma quickly made her mark in the legal field through her unwavering dedication to navigating complex legal challenges.





**PRIYA HUGGETT**  
Partner  
Crosbie Gliner Schiffman  
Southard & Swanson LLP

Priya Huggett is a partner with Crosbie Gliner Schiffman Southard & Swanson (CGS3). With 20 years of experience in corporate/commercial real estate law, her practice emphasizes private equity, joint ventures, mergers and acquisitions, commercial contracts, dispositions, development, leasing, finance and operations. With respect to real property, her focus is on purchase and sale, commercial leasing, subdivision, easements and licenses and financing. Previously, she was general counsel for Brixton Capital, providing oversight for the acquisition, leasing and disposition of properties. Additionally, she served as general counsel and executive vice president for Kelly Investment Group, and as senior vice president/general counsel for Sea Breeze Properties, LLC. She serves on the NAIOP Board and the board of directors for the New Children's Museum and holds an LLB from The University of British Columbia and B.A. degrees in criminology and political science from Simon Fraser University.





**HAHN LOESER**  
CONGRATULATES  
**DANIELLE C. HUMPHRIES**

On her selection to San Diego's Women of Influence  
in Law by *San Diego Business Journal*.

Danielle is a trusted legal and wealth advisor with experience, insight, and sophistication. She serves families, managing a multitude of issues, including trust and estate related challenges, wealth preservation and protection, philanthropic planning, and tax planning.





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**DANIELLE HUMPHRIES**  
Partner / San Diego Trusts & Estates Practice Group Chair  
Hahn Loeser & Parks

Danielle Humphries is Chair of Hahn Loeser's San Diego Trusts & Estates Practice Group with a reputation as a trusted legal advisor with experience, insight, and sophistication. She serves as general counsel for families, managing a multitude of issues, including trust and estate related challenges, wealth preservation and protection, philanthropic planning, and tax planning. She represents fiduciaries and beneficiaries in trust and estate administration and litigation, including advising individual and corporate fiduciaries on risk mitigation and their responsibilities in the administration of trusts and estates. Danielle is an advocate for gender parity within her industry and a steering committee member of the firm's Women's Leadership Initiative. She volunteers on San Diego community boards, including Promises2Kids and completed a term as Chair of the Philanthropy Committee. Her list of awards includes Women of Influence in Law (3 yrs) and Best Lawyers in America (4 yrs).



**RACHEL JAMES**  
Partner  
Higgs Fletcher & Mack

Rachel James is an exceptional attorney, and an actively engaged community volunteer. In her practice, Rachel represents clients in high-asset, high-conflict divorce matters. Her considerable experience and understanding of complex family law matters is an asset to her clients as they navigate the emotionally straining divorce process. Licensed in both Arizona and California, Rachel's community outreach has included volunteering for the Maricopa County Bar Association's (MCBA) Legal Assistance to Women and Shelters, and chairing the MCBA's Race Judicata, raising money for domestic violence education. Rachel's volunteerism in San Diego includes serving on the California Western School of Law Alumni Association Board of Directors, and as a trustee on the San Diego Law Library Foundation Board. She is currently serving on the Board for the Iowa Women's Alumni Network and has been involved with the Lawyers Club of San Diego.



**MYRIAH JAWORSKI**  
Member / Partner  
Clark Hill PLC

Member in Charge of Clark Hill's San Diego office, Myriah is a go-to advisor on data privacy and AI legal issues. Recognized as a Data Privacy and Cybersecurity "Rising Star," her career defending clients in privacy and data breach class action litigation, regulatory investigations, and technology disputes started through the DOJ's selective Honors Program. She achieves precedent-setting results in wire transfer fraud, cyber bullying and right to publicity matters. Notably, Myriah delivered an impressive win in a first-of-its-kind federal trial on a misdirected wire transfer/business email compromise loss for client Studco Building Systems. An acknowledged industry leader, she was appointed to the State of California Bar Association Consulting Group to Establish a Legal Specialization in Privacy; is the Chair of the San Diego County Bar Association Privacy and Cybersecurity Law Executive Committee; and is Vice Chair of the San Diego County Bar Association's Privacy and Cyber Committee.



**MARISSA JOHNSON**  
Partner  
Minerva Law, LLP

Marissa is a founding partner of Minerva Law, LLP. Her practice emphasizes all aspects of family law. She was named a Super Lawyers Rising Star in 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023. Marissa received her Bachelor of Arts degrees in Psychology and History, cum laude, from the University of California, San Diego. She earned her Juris Doctor, cum laude, from the University of San Diego School of Law where she was inducted into the Order of the Coif. She is admitted to the State Bar of California, a member of the San Diego County Bar Association and the San Diego Family Law Bar Association. Marissa served on The Junior League of San Diego's Board of Directors from 2016-2018. Ms. Johnson received a "Volunteer of Excellence" award from Children's Hospital for her work with the "Kid's in Court" program.



**STACEY KARTCHNER**  
Senior Counsel  
Klinedinst PC

Stacey Kartchner is the 2024 President of the San Diego County Bar Association. She is Senior Counsel at the law firm of Klinedinst. Ms. Kartchner specializes in criminal defense. She also represents individuals with licensing issues, and in legal malpractice cases. Ms. Kartchner serves as the Chairperson of the Material Witness Advisory Panel for the United States District Court for the Southern District of California. In addition, she serves as the Chairperson of the Criminal Justice Memorial Committee. For the past 13 years, Ms. Kartchner has served on the Board of Directors of Accessibility, a nonprofit specializing in micro-loans. Ms. Kartchner is a past president of the Criminal Defense Lawyers Club and a past president of the Criminal Defense Bar Association. She has been named to the list of Super Lawyers since 2015, and is AV Preeminent Peer Review Rated by Martindale-Hubbell.



**Congratulations to  
Shadee Duarte  
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Attorneys for Real Estate,  
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**Shadee  
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# WOMEN of INFLUENCE in LAW 2024



**ALLY KEEGAN**  
Partner  
Law Office of David P. Shapiro

Ally Keegan is a criminal defense attorney and Partner at the Law Office of David P. Shapiro, where she practices state and federal criminal defense in San Diego. She is also an adjunct professor at the University of San Diego School of Law Paralegal Program, where she teaches criminal law. She serves on the Board of Directors for Lawyers Club of San Diego, where she is the Treasurer, Chair of the History, Policy & Bylaws Committee, and Co-Chair of the Advocacy & Reproductive Justice Committee. She is also a Board Director for the Women's Museum of California, and a Board Trustee with the Tariq Khamisa Foundation. She has been recognized as a Super Lawyers Rising Star since 2021, a recognition reserved for only 2.5% of practicing lawyers.



**IVETTE KUYATEH**  
Founding Partner  
Kuyateh Law Group

Ivette Kuyateh, @KingdomSheroLawyerInHeels, is a devoted Christian, wife, mom and trailblazing attorney focused on empowering others as the Founding Partner of Kuyateh Law Group. Featured on WealthWave TV, Wavy 10 News, Invasora 99.7, Pulsar 107.3, N+ Tijuana, NBC San Diego, San Diego Voice and Viewpoint, SDNews.com and CBS8 San Diego, she is a seasoned financial educator and passionate about empowering others. Ivette is a former prosecutor and experienced litigator who has handled hundreds of trials. Her cases have ranged from private employment discrimination and harassment lawsuits, family law and immigration matters to large insurance defense cases for Fortune 500 companies and public entities. Today, Ivette is a highly sought after expert on Financial Abuse and Domestic Violence training service providers and first responders nationwide and dedicates one day a month to providing free legal counsel to victims of abuse at One Safe Place Family Justice Center in San Marcos.



**AMY LESSA**  
Partner  
Fisher Phillips

Amy has advocated for employers across the country for 25 years. Clients rely on her for day-to-day advice and counsel on workplace issues, guidance regarding legal compliance and prevention of employment disputes, drafting policies, training managers, and defending against employment claims. She is experienced in harassment and discrimination litigation, wrongful termination, wage-hour disputes, whistleblower, and retaliation claims, and obtaining workplace violence restraining orders to protect the workplace. Amy has a proven track record of successfully defending employers in state and federal courts and in arbitration, as well as in administrative matters before the EEOC, the CA Civil Rights Department, the Division of Labor Standards Enforcement, the Workers' Compensation Appeals Board, and the California Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board. Amy mentors junior lawyers developing toward partnership and helps them achieve work-life balance to find professional and personal success.



**JENNA LEYTON-JONES**  
Founder / Attorney  
Leyton Jones Law, APC

Jenna is an experienced employment law attorney and trusted business advisor. Through employment law advice and counsel, employee training, and independent workplace investigations, Jenna provides employers with the tools and information they need to create a thriving workforce and achieve their business goals. She strongly believes in the adage "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," and she helps her clients institute effective policies and practices that both protect the organization and promote a respectful, congenial working environment for its employees. Jenna is an Association of Workplace Investigators Certificate Holder and has been awarded an "AV Pre-eminent" rating by Martindale Hubbell for achieving the highest level of professional excellence based on her legal knowledge, communication skills, and ethical standards. She has also been selected for inclusion on the San Diego Business Journal's "Best of the Bar," Super Lawyers, The Best Lawyers in America lists.



**JENNIFER LUTZ**  
Shareholder  
Pettit Kohn Ingrassia Lutz & Dolin

Jennifer N. Lutz is a founding shareholder and co-chair of the firm's Employment and Labor Department. She represents a broad spectrum of clients and prominent companies defending and advising on their most complex and important employment cases. She has secured favorable outcomes and successes in a variety of cases in state and federal courts and administrative agencies. She is a widely sought out author and speaker – frequently invited to provide employment practices and employee management training and guidance for private firms, other attorneys, and professional organizations throughout California. She has been recognized by Best Lawyers in America for her work in both Employment Law – Management and Labor and Employment Litigation, and has received many honors from local and national publications. Jennifer has served as Vice President of the National Human Resources Association and Vice President of Legislation for San Diego SHRM, the region's largest organization of human resource professionals.



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CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL THOSE RECOGNIZED  
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## 2024 Woman of Influence in Law



A special congratulations to Elizabeth Sperling, partner and co-chair of Glaser Weil's Banking and Financial Services practice.

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WOMEN of INFLUENCE in LAW 2024



**ANN MAAS**  
Partner  
Crosbie Gliner Schiffman Southard & Swanson LLP (CGS3)

Ann Maas is a partner with Crosbie Gliner Schiffman Southard & Swanson (CGS3). One of the original firm members, she was promoted to partner in 2022. Throughout her more than 25-year legal career, she has applied her technical, legal, and market knowledge in representing both landlords and tenants in millions of square feet of commercial space across all asset types and also has significant expertise in handling purchase and sale transactions. Through her professional rapport, she works efficiently and consistent with her client's needs and business objectives to get deals done. Prior to joining CGS3, she was a real estate attorney at Mintz Levin. She began her legal career at Allen Matkins and was in-house senior counsel at Equastone, a real estate investment firm. She holds a J.D. from BYU's J. Reuben Clark Law School and a B.A. in English from Brigham Young University (BYU).





**MARISA MILLER**  
Partner  
Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton LLP

Marisa Miller is a partner in the Chambers-ranked Business Trial Practice Group and the Office Managing Partner of the San Diego (Del Mar) office. She is a member of the firm's Energy, Construction, Healthcare and Transportation Teams. Marisa is a first chair litigator who clients entrust to handle their most sensitive and complex matters. Marisa regularly represents clients across industries in commercial disputes involving contracts, trade secrets, corporate governance, partnership and fiduciary relationships, inverse condemnation and other strict liability claims, business tort and fraud. Marisa also handles internal investigations. She has extensive experience advising clients in all stages of litigation, from pre-lawsuit strategy and advice to post-trial motions and appeals. Her practice also includes international and domestic arbitration, as well as regulatory matters. Marisa's trial experience includes jury trials, bench trials and domestic and international arbitrations.





**MELANIA MIRZAKHANIAN**  
Sr. Associate Attorney  
G10 Law, APLC

Melania Mirzakhanian is a senior associate attorney in the Transactions Team at G10 Law. With over ten years of legal experience, her area of practice includes civil and real estate law, with a focus on land use and property rights within the coastal zone. Additionally, as a Real Estate Broker for over twenty years Ms. Mirzakhanian has vast practice-oriented experience in residential and commercial real estate transactions, property management and lending. She is also considered an effective expert witness in real estate litigation involving issues about valuation, standard of care, disclosures, licensee duties, and mortgage lending. Ms. Mirzakhanian obtained her Juris Doctorate from the Thomas Jefferson School of Law with undergraduate studies at California State University of Los Angeles. She has recently earned a master's degree in Organizational Leadership from Point Loma Nazarene University. Beyond her professional achievements, Melania supports the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation.





**SARA NEVA**  
Partner  
Procopio

Sara Neva is a commercial real estate partner at Procopio. Sara counsels clients on real estate purchase and sales, leases, joint ventures, and financing. Neva continues to build her own rapidly growing client base by creatively guiding real estate developers, investors, lenders, landlords and tenants through the ever-changing economic environment. Neva finds creative and practical solutions for clients, while cutting down on unnecessary legal roadblocks. By focusing on real-world issues, Neva is key to reaching deals faster and more efficiently. She was honored as a Best Lawyers One to Watch (2024), Super Lawyers Rising Star (2020-2024), SD Metro Top Attorney (2024), and SD Metro 40 under 40 (2021). Sara graduated magna cum laude from Santa Clara University (B.S.) and magna cum laude from the University of Minnesota Law School (J.D.).





**LAURA NICHOLS**  
Shareholder  
Buchalter

Laura Nichols is a Shareholder in Buchalter's San Diego office and a member of the Tax, Benefits, and Estate Planning practice group. Ms. Nichols is a Certified Specialist in Estate Planning, Trust & Probate Law by the State Bar of California Board of Legal Specialization and is also certified as an Accredited Estate Planner® by the National Association of Estate Planners & Councils. Only approximately five percent of California's attorneys are certified as specialists by the State Bar. Ms. Nichols has considerable experience in the areas of estate planning, trust and probate administration. She advises clients on sophisticated estate planning issues including multigenerational family business succession planning; estate, gift, generation skipping taxation planning and property tax planning including charitable gift planning. She also represents individuals, private professional fiduciaries, and corporate trustees as fiduciaries through trust and estate administrations.





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**Teresa M. Beck**  
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President of National Conference  
of Women's Bar Associations



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**CHERYL NIEMAN BRECHLIN**  
Senior Counsel  
Harvest LLP

Cheryl Nieman Brechlin is a gifted attorney and dedicated advocate for her clients. With formative experience in both litigation and transactional work, she diligently and tenaciously represents commercial developers, property owners, homebuilders, businesses, and institutional investors in their intricate transactional real estate and corporate affairs. She specializes in retail, office, and industrial leasing, as well as purchase and sale transactions, debt and equity financing, and construction and development matters. Having represented both institutional landlords and sophisticated tenants in leasing of multiple asset classes, Cheryl has an in-depth understanding of both sides of a commercial lease transaction. Cheryl is a member of the San Diego chapter of NAIOP and the Membership Committee of CREW San Diego, which supports women in the commercial real estate industry. She also regularly fosters dogs in need through a New Life Charitable Foundation.





**JENNIFER OLIVER**  
Counsel  
Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney

Jennifer Oliver is a member of Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney's Litigation, Cybersecurity and Data Privacy teams. An accomplished litigation, consumer protection, and privacy attorney with experience representing both the plaintiff and defense side on cases, she has litigated numerous class action, complex commercial litigation, and privacy matters, including major antitrust cases. She also defends clients in consumer class actions, antitrust, and data breach cases. Jennifer is a certified privacy professional through the International Association of Privacy Professionals, an organization which represents the gold standard for privacy professionals. In addition to her busy practice, she serves on the Board of the San Diego Volunteer Lawyer Program and the Dean's Advisory Council for the University at Buffalo School of Law. She recently worked with the California Lawyers Association Privacy Section and as chairperson of the Lawyer's Club of San Diego's Awards and Nominations Committee.





**STEPHANIE PFAFF**  
Partner  
Higgs Fletcher & Mack

HFM Partner Stephanie Pfaff's practice focuses on transactional tax and real estate tax matters including California documentary transfer tax and property tax, qualified opportunity zones, like-kind exchange transactions, and renewable energy tax credits. In her decade of experience, she has also advised tax-exempt and nonexempt nonprofit organizations and closely held businesses, and advised clients in transactional tax, corporate, and real estate matters for estate planning trusts and family-owned businesses. Stephanie serves in leadership roles including as a Board Member for San Diego Nice Guys, which supports San Diego families, and Girls on the Run of Riverside County, which encourages girls to be more active and "stand up for themselves and others." Her recent pro bono work includes representing 501(c)(3) organizations and representing a veteran with a discharge upgrade. She is also actively involved in the Ramona Chamber of Commerce and the Ramona Valley Vineyard Association.





**MARIA PUM**  
Partner  
Henderson Caverly & Pum LLP

Maria K. Pum, joined the firm in 2007 from White & Case LLP where she was a partner in the Financial Restructuring and Insolvency Group. Since she began her practice over 30 years ago, Ms. Pum has focused her practice in the areas of creditor rights, corporate restructuring, bankruptcy litigation, real estate & construction loan financing, and commercial law. Representing a diverse clientele including financial institutions, Fortune 100 companies, and high net-worth individuals, Ms. Pum has assisted her clients in all phases of the business cycle, both in economic upturns and in recessions, and in industries ranging from agri-business to the hospitality industry, to the technology sector in many contexts including, financing transactions, contract disputes, real estate acquisition, construction and financing, and in bankruptcy matters. She has received repeated recognition from The Best Lawyers in America since 2017 for her outstanding contributions to bankruptcy and commercial law.





**SALLY REDDY**  
Managing Attorney  
Dallo Law Group

Sally Reddy, Esq. LLM is the managing attorney at Dallo Law Group, a boutique law firm in San Diego specializing in tax dispute resolutions and complex tax planning. Sally loves to nurture young lawyers and help them grow in their career. She serves as a mentor to the Odyssey Mentorship Program through the California Lawyer's Association Taxation Section and is a member of the Legal Aid Society of San Diego Low Income Taxpayer Clinic Pro Bono Panel. She is passionate about tax law and enjoys working with her clients – predominantly small business owners in San Diego County – to resolve their tax issues. Through her zealous advocacy, Sally saves her clients over \$900,000 in taxes on average annually. Sally is especially committed to helping women and minority-owned businesses thrive in today's tough economic market. She has been awarded Leaders in Law, Businesswoman of the Year and as a Super Lawyer.



CONGRATULATIONS

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Shannon Finley, Esq.



Jennifer Lutz, Esq.



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**ALLISON REGO**

Partner  
Barnes & Thornburg LLP

Allison Rego is committed to maximizing recovery for clients facing insolvency and complex litigation, crafting tailored strategies in and out of court. Her practice focuses on commercial litigation, bankruptcy, and restructuring, representing creditors, committees, receivers, assignees, and litigants nationwide. With experience spanning multiple industry groups, Allison has a proven track record in business torts and other commercial disputes. Recently, she was a member of trial teams that successfully obtained two jury trial verdicts, one in favor of a plaintiff in a cross-border dispute relating to the lease for a prominent billboard and another in favor of a secured lender defending post-foreclosure litigation brought under the commercial code resulting in a complete defense verdict. Allison has served on the local rules and advisory committee for the bankruptcy court for the Southern District of California and has produced panels at several bankruptcy conferences and events.



**STEPHANIE REYNOLDS**

Partner  
Fisher Phillips

Stephanie has over two decades of litigation experience representing employers and employees in high-stakes litigation matters in state and federal courts in CA, and in arbitration. She specializes in defending employers in discrimination, harassment, retaliation, wrongful termination, and equal pay lawsuits, as well as wage-hour class and representative actions. She counsels employers on compliance with state and federal laws, personnel policies and procedures, employee discipline and terminations, and protecting proprietary information. She trains employers in harassment and discrimination prevention and related workplace issues, and frequently conducts workplace investigations. As a former Division I women's soccer team player and captain, she leverages her background to counsel and defend clients regarding Title IX issues involving student-athlete employment and professional, collegiate and amateur athletic clubs in litigation as a member of the firm's Sports Industry team.



**HEATHER RILEY**

Partner  
Allen Matkins

Heather Riley, a land use partner in the San Diego office of law firm Allen Matkins, has worked on some of San Diego's most significant land use projects. Her work has helped shape the community her family calls home and has increased housing production across the region. She is at the forefront of the housing crisis dialogue, working with the Building Industry Association of San Diego, the City of San Diego and the County of San Diego to develop solutions that are practical and defensible. Her efforts resulted in a published appellate decision that codified density bonus law up and down the state and has been cited by regulators and applicants alike in their ongoing push to speed up market-rate and affordable housing production. In addition to her work in the housing arena, Heather also oversees a number of complex and controversial commercial and industrial developments throughout Southern California.

Allen Matkins



**KRISTEN ROBERTS**

Founder & Managing Attorney  
Trestle Law, APC

Kristen is a California-based intellectual property attorney who helps business owners build a bridge from their brands to their bank accounts. Consistently recognized and awarded as one of the top intellectual property attorneys in her area, Kristen is highly experienced in the fields of trademark and copyright registration, licensing, enforcement, and litigation and has closed transactions with companies like Walmart, Target, Lululemon, Chipotle, and more. In recent years, Kristen has helped Web3 business owners protect and strategize their IP in the ever-shifting world of the metaverse. She's also worked as an adjunct law professor, teaching various intellectual property courses, and is heavily involved in giving back to her community - serving as a commissioner for the City of San Diego's Redistricting Commission and now as an executive team member of TEDXSandiego. Kristen is passionate about giving back to creative communities.



**ANNA ROMANSKAYA**

Partner  
Stark & D'Ambrosio, LLP

Anna M. Romanskaya is a Partner with Stark & D'Ambrosio, LLP in San Diego, CA where she manages the firm's family law division. She represents clients in all aspects of family law, including pre and post marital agreements, marital dissolutions, child custody, child and spousal support, property division and post judgment issues. Anna is well-respected for her client advocacy and collegial relationships. Anna devotes much of her time to mentoring younger lawyers and law students and presenting programming and training on personal development and professional advancement. Anna has held multiple leadership positions with the American Bar Association, been on the board of directors for the San Diego County Bar Association, Lawyers Club of San Diego, Strategic Trusted Advisor Roundtable, and California Lawyers Association. Anna graduated from the University of California, Santa Barbara with a double-major in Political Science and Law and Society; JD from Thomas Jefferson



## Navigating Divorce After 50: Key Financial Considerations

PROVIDED BY **SARAH SCHAFFER, CLS-F, LL.M AND JACQUELINE L. PARKS, J.D., LL.M., CDFA®**

As divorce rates among individuals over 50 continue to rise, it's crucial to understand the significant financial implications of late-life separation. This article aims to provide an overview of the key financial considerations for those embarking on a divorce journey later in life, helping individuals navigate the complexities of asset division, retirement planning and estate management.

### Pre-Divorce Financial Planning

Before initiating the divorce process, gathering and organizing all financial documents, including bank statements, tax returns, and investment portfolios, is essential. Assessing assets and liabilities, such as real estate, retirement accounts, and debts, clarifies your financial landscape. Whether for efficiency or convenience, many couples will delegate the responsibility for managing the household finances to one or the other spouse. Consulting both financial and legal professionals can offer valuable guidance and ensure informed decision-making both before and throughout the divorce proceedings. Partnering with a financial professional who is willing and able to guide you through personal financial planning will establish a solid foundation for managing your financial affairs post-divorce.

### Division of Assets and Debts

The division of assets and debts varies depending on whether you reside in a community property or a common law proper-

ty state. Understanding the implications of the statutory scheme is crucial. California is a community property state, and the efforts and labor of each spouse are considered to benefit the community. Retirement accounts, pensions, business interests, and real estate are often significant assets subject to division, and careful consideration of tax implications is necessary to avoid unexpected financial burdens. Assets that appear to be equal in value on a balance sheet may not actually be equal because of how they are taxed, as well as differences in liquidity and ability to produce income.

### Spousal Support and Alimony

Spousal support, also known as alimony, may be awarded based on factors such as the length of the marriage, income disparity, and standard of living during the marriage. The duration and amount of alimony payments can significantly impact post-divorce financial stability. Understanding the tax implications for both the payer and recipient is essential for effective financial planning. If your former spouse is obligated to pay you support for a period of years, consider including a life insurance policy to guarantee that you will receive the designated amount in the event your former spouse dies before they fulfill the support obligation.

### Impact on Retirement Planning

Divorce later in life can derail retirement plans, necessitating adjustments in goals

and timelines. Maximizing retirement account contributions (including catch-up contributions) becomes crucial to rebuilding financial security. If the marital assets include one or more qualified retirement plans, they may be divided between both spouses via a Qualified Domestic Relations Order (QDRO). This division can transfer a portion of the funds from one spouse's retirement plan into a separate account for the other spouse. If your marriage lasted for ten years or longer, you may still qualify to claim social security benefits based on your ex-spouse's employment record. Reassessing your sources of income is critical to ensuring you have adequate support during your retirement years.

### Estate Planning Updates

Divorce necessitates updates to estate planning documents, including wills, trusts, financial powers of attorney, healthcare power of attorney, a medical directive and beneficiary designations for retirement plans and life insurance. Do not put this off. Ensuring that your estate planning documents reflect your new circumstances and accurately reflect your wishes in the event of your incapacity or death can protect against unintended consequences.

### Psychological and Emotional Support

Divorce can take a significant emotional toll, particularly later in life. Seeking therapy or joining support groups can provide

invaluable emotional support during this challenging time. Surround yourself with trusted advisors and allow appropriate time for careful consideration and analysis before making big financial decisions.

In sum, navigating divorce after 50 requires careful consideration of various financial factors to secure a stable and prosperous future. By proactively addressing asset division, retirement planning and estate planning, individuals can mitigate financial risks and build a solid foundation for the next chapter of their lives.



*Sarah T. Schaffer, CFLS, LL.M., is the founder and managing partner of the Schaffer Family Law Group, a full-service divorce, mediation, and family law firm known for effective legal representation and compassionate client service.*



*Jacqueline Parks, J.D., LL.M., CDFA® is a Director at Truist Wealth. She leads a team of Wealth Strategists and has extensive experience advising clients on financial planning concepts and wealth transfer techniques.*



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**LISA ROPER**  
Partner  
Henderson Caverly & Pum LLP

Lisa B. Roper, a partner at Henderson, Caverly & Pum LLP, is a key figure in the Estate & Trust Litigation Group, Trust Administration & Probate Group, and Civil & Commercial Litigation Group. Specializing in estate and trust controversies, administrations, guardianships, and conservatorships, she offers invaluable counsel. Admitted to practice in California and certified as a Specialist in Estate Planning, Trust, and Probate Law, Roper holds a law degree and LL.M. in Taxation from the University of San Diego School of Law. Actively engaged in professional associations, she contributes significantly to legal discourse, co-authoring notable articles and receiving recognition from The Best Lawyers: Ones to Watch® In America and Southern California Super Lawyers – San Diego. Before joining Henderson, Caverly & Pum LLP, she served as in-house counsel at a federal savings bank. Roper's expertise and dedication underscore her contributions to the legal community.

**Henderson  
Caverly Pum LLP**



**HEATHER ROSING**  
CEO & President  
Klinedinst PC

Heather Rosing has had a major impact on the local, state, and national legal communities. In addition to serving as CEO and President, Ms. Rosing chairs the firm's Complex Litigation and Professional Liability Department. She has been a recognized leader the community, serving as President of the San Diego County Bar Association and Vice-President of the State Bar of California. In 2018, she was chosen as the first President of the California Lawyers Association, the second-largest voluntary bar association in the country. She also helped launch the California Lawyers Foundation, and previously led ChangeLawyers (formerly the California Bar Foundation). Today, she chairs the ABA Standing Committee on Lawyers' Professional Liability. She has been recognized for her work in the legal community, including being named a "Lawyer of the Decade" by the Daily Journal in 2021. This year, she was named the top-rated attorney in San Diego County by Super Lawyers.

**Klinedinst  
ATTORNEYS**



**JENNIFER RUBIN**  
Member  
Mintz

Jen draws on over 30 years of experience crafting legal solutions to employment challenges. Her clients include large and small businesses and executives. She advises technology, financial services, publishing, retail, professional services, and health care companies seeking regulatory, litigation, and compliance advice. Her bi-coastal employment practice includes counseling clients regarding wage and hour compliance and trial practice, with a focus on class actions, trade secrets and employment mobility disputes, internal workplace investigations, and disputes arising from the employment relationship (including as they relate to discrimination, harassment and retaliation, leave and accommodation, non-competes and other restrictive covenant issues, and other employment-related issues). While Jen is a zealous advocate in the courtroom, she relishes finding solutions for her clients as they navigate the manner in which the employment relationship impacts their business and personal lives.

**MINTZ**



**LESLIE RYLAND**  
CLS-F  
Schaffer Family Law Group

Leslie Ryland, CLS-F, is a principal attorney with Schaffer Family Law Group. Leslie is a family law specialist, certified by the State Bar of California, and a certified collaborative divorce practitioner. Leslie represents clients in all types of family law matters, with a special focus on custody issues. She has successfully litigated all types of family law disputes, including complex financial matters and highly contested custody cases, and she is also a skilled mediator. A leader in San Diego's legal community, Leslie is Past President of Collaborative Practice San Diego, an association of attorneys, mental health professionals and financial advisors working to promote collaborative processes and peaceful resolution of family law issues. Leslie was also featured as one of the Best Divorce Attorneys in San Diego of 2024 by Forbes Advisor.

**Schaffer  
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**PUJA SACHDEV**  
Managing Attorney  
San Diego Divorce Lawyers, APC

Puja is a renowned family law and divorce attorney in San Diego. She is also noted for her extensive background in the finance and business field with undergraduate studies in Business Marketing & Management and graduate studies in Financial & Tax Planning. She is a Certified Family Law Specialist and was the first family law attorney in the greater San Diego area who obtained the designation of Certified Divorce Financial Analyst™. Puja frequently represents minor children in highly contested family law cases appointed by the Court and volunteers time as a settlement judge to assist parties in reaching conclusion of their divorces and avoid trial.

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A dynamic advocate and trusted advisor, Johanna provides superior Public Law advisory skills and subject matter expertise to San Diego area non-profits and public entities.

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Congratulations, Myriah V. Jaworski, a 2024 Woman of Influence in Law!

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**AMELIA SANCHEZ**  
Partner  
Crosbie Gliner Schiffman Southard & Swanson LLP (CGS3)

Amelia Sanchez is a partner with Crosbie Gliner Schiffman Southard & Swanson (CGS3). She joined CGS3 in 2015 and has since successfully represented national, regional, and local companies in all asset categories – building on her expertise in leasing transactions, specifically retail, office, financial, life science, mixed-use, industrial and telecommunications. Additionally, she has handled a variety of business matters, including licensing, consultant, easement, access, vendor, co-marketing, service, and management agreements. She previously worked in-house as senior legal counsel at Cricket Communications, Inc. (now Cricket Wireless) and regional general counsel at Newland Communities, LLC. She is the co-founder of the SES Tennis Center, a non-profit that built public tennis courts and provides the children of Tecate, Mexico with access to tennis lessons, equipment, and transportation. She holds a J.D. from USD School of Law and a B.A. from Dartmouth.





**SARAH SCHAFFER**  
CLS-F, LL.M.  
Schaffer Family Law Group

Sarah T. Schaffer, CLS-F is founder of Schaffer Family Law Group. As a family law specialist, certified by the State Bar of California, Sarah represents clients in high-conflict family matters. She has an LL.M. in taxation and prior to becoming an attorney, worked as a tax consultant. Her background allows her to understand and assist clients with their tax and financial planning needs, and gives her the ability to ensure their assets are adequately protected. Sarah also served in the Marine Corps and recently retired as Deputy Director, Reserve Legal Support, Headquarters Marine Corps, Judge Advocate Division, Washington DC. Military families appreciate and trust Sarah's ability to guide them through issues that are specific to service members. Sarah is involved with Casa Cornelia Law Center, which provides pro bono legal services to victims of human and civil rights violations, and Kids Turn, which supports children and parents experiencing family separations.





**TANYA SCHIERLING**  
Managing Partner  
Solomon Ward Seidenwurm & Smith, LLP

Tanya Schierling, managing partner of Solomon Ward Seidenwurm & Smith LLP, is a strategic, effective litigator trusted by corporations, start-ups and individuals. Her career began over 20 years ago as a military prosecutor in the U.S. Army's Judge Advocate General's Corps. Today, she navigates clients through business litigation, distribution and franchise matters, intra-company and founder disputes, employment law matters and real property and lease disputes. In a recent arbitration between global companies, she achieved an award worth 10s of millions of dollars. She is committed to elevating the legal industry, mentoring rising lawyers and supporting STEM students. She has served the ARCS Foundation and is a member of the California Lawyers Association, Maryland State Bar Association, San Diego County Bar Association and U.S. Supreme Court Bar Association. Tanya holds a Martindale-Hubbell AV Preeminent rating and is an AV Top Rated Lawyer in commercial and business litigation.





**GEORGIA SCHNEIDER**  
Shareholder  
G10 Law, APLC

Georgia Z. Schneider is a shareholder and head of the Litigation Team at G10 Law, specializing in real estate and business disputes. She brings over 17 years of litigation experience to matters such as commercial real estate contract disputes, real estate failure to disclose, real estate brokerage and agent breach of fiduciary duty, and commercial unlawful detainers. As a licensed California real estate broker, Ms. Schneider offers unique insights into real estate litigation matters. Ms. Schneider graduated Summa Cum Laude from Southwestern Law School and Cum Laude from UCLA with a B.A. in Psychology. Prior to joining G10 Law, she was an associate at Ponist Law Group in San Diego and Morgan Lewis in Los Angeles. Outside of her legal career, Ms. Schneider actively supports nonprofits such as Girl Scouts of the USA, which is dedicated to empowering young women.





**JOY SIDHWA**  
Senior Counsel  
MoginRubin LLP

Joy M. Sidhwa is a seasoned antitrust attorney specializing in plaintiffs-side antitrust and competition class actions. She has represented millions of class members and led e-discovery teams in cases involving price-fixing, monopoly, and other competition violations. Her clients include small to large companies, trade groups, and consumers, and she has helped them recover hundreds of millions of dollars in damages. Joy has been involved in discovery matters against leading technology, biotech, and pharmaceutical companies globally and provides legal services to local businesses. Additionally, she serves on the boards of various legal organizations in San Diego, showcasing her dedication to her profession and community.








Congratulations to **Dawn Hall Cunneen** for being selected as a 2024 Woman of Influence in Law!



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Fisher Phillips celebrates the advancement of women both within the firm and within the community.



**Amy Lessa**  
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With almost 600 attorneys in 41 offices across the United States and Mexico, Fisher Phillips is an international labor and employment firm providing practical business solutions for employers' workplace legal problems. We regularly advise and counsel clients on issues surrounding wage and hour, employment discrimination and harassment, litigation, workplace safety, immigration, trade secrets and non-competes, and more.



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**COLLEEN SMITH**  
Partner  
Latham & Watkins LLP

Colleen Smith is the Vice Chair of Latham's Securities Litigation Practice, Vice Chair of Latham's Public Company & Board Representation Practice, and Vice Chair of the firm's Training & Career Enhancement Committee. She helps public companies prevent or navigate litigation issues arising from class actions, M&A, activism, Delaware corporate governance, and SEC enforcement matters. She has recently led key wins including: winning a rare JNOV for San Diego-based Impact Biomedicines after leading a four-week trial; winning dismissal of class actions for Homology Medicines, Atlassian, The Trade Desk, TuSimple, and Teleperformance. She is currently representing Endeavor in high-profile merger litigation, as well as The Trade Desk CEO in the first CEO equity grant case since the challenge to Elon Musk's pay package. Before law school, Smith was one of the first women in the country to serve a US Naval Surface Warfare Officer on a combatant ship.





**ELIZABETH SPERLING**  
Partner & Co-Chair, Banking & Financial Services  
Glaser Weil Fink Howard

Elizabeth co-chairs the Firm's Financial Services and Banking Practice. She is an exceptional San Diego-based litigator who is widely recognized for her representation of financial institutions and other consumer-facing businesses and high net worth individuals. In addition to her recognition as a "Most Influential Minority Attorney" and "Leader of Influence," Elizabeth was recently named one of SD Metro's "Top Attorneys in San Diego" and a "Leading Litigator in America" by Lawdragon. Recent successes include securing dismissals and defending appeals on behalf of banks and mortgage services in two putative class-actions-turned-mass-actions; successfully representing a minority shareholder in a complex arbitration brought against another shareholder; and representing an international developer and its receivers in a high-profile San Diego lawsuit. She has been instrumental in the growth of Glaser Weil's San Diego office and is actively involved in DEI efforts within the legal community.





**CATHERINE SRITHONG WICKER**  
Partner  
Hooper, Lundy & Bookman, P.C.

I enjoy working with clients to develop effective and practical solutions that address the unique circumstances of each case. As an attorney who represents health care providers, my goal is to help clients navigate complex legal issues so that they can focus on delivering quality patient care." Catherine Srithong Wicker counsels a wide range of health systems, hospitals, and medical staffs on various regulatory compliance and litigation matters. She provides full-service support to hospital and medical staff leaders and is regularly called upon to assist clients with both day-to-day and complex health care issues. Catherine also has extensive experience representing skilled nursing facilities, laboratories, and other healthcare providers and suppliers in various matters, including fraud and abuse, internal investigations, and civil proceedings.





**AUBRI STEELE**  
Firm Administrator  
The Opus Law Firm

With a demonstrated history of building and managing teams in an entrepreneurial capacity as a former Founder and CEO, Ms. Steele brings her innate sense of leadership and organization to the firm in her position as the Firm Manager. In this role, Ms. Steele is responsible for day-to-day firm operations, managing firm personnel, accounting oversight, as well as client and customer engagement. In addition to her entrepreneurial endeavors, Ms. Steele has over ten years of combined experience in the commercial real estate and legal service industries, aiding in her understanding and ability to serve as Opus' in-house Transaction Coordinator, assisting with complex transactions that require multi-party coordination and document management.







**HEATHER STONE**  
Partner  
Lagasse Branch Bell + Kinkead

Heather Stone is a partner at Lagasse Branch Bell + Kinkead in the firm's labor and employment group. Ms. Stone regularly defends employers and individuals accused of wrongdoing in the workplace, including defense of claims of discrimination, retaliation, harassment, and wrongful termination. She also has extensive experience defending wage and hour class actions, including PAGA claims. In addition, Ms. Stone provides employers with advice, counseling, and training to help them lower the frequency and severity of employment practice claims. Ms. Stone serves as a member of the Board of Directors and Governance Committee Chair of Kids Included Together, an active member of ZLAC Women's Rowing Club, and served her community for nearly ten years in MADCAPS (Mothers and Daughters Club Assisting Philanthropies). Within the firm, Heather is the leader and advisor for LBBK's paralegal group and is the Outreach Co-Chair for the Labor and Employment Practice Area Committee with NAMWOL.



Franklin Soto Leeds congratulates Cheryl Dunn Soto on being recognized by the San Diego Business Journal as a 2024 Woman of Influence in Law





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Gruenberg Law congratulates **Pamela Vallero** on her selection as a 2024 Woman of Influence in Law!



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MARIA STOUT  
Partner  
Knobbe Martens

Maria Stout is a partner at intellectual property law firm Knobbe Martens and a professor at the University of San Diego School of Law. Ms. Stout advises on strategic planning and management of IP assets, particularly patents, for clients ranging from start-ups to international corporations with billions of dollars of market share. Her roles on the firm's Executive, Diversity, and Business Development committees testify to her leadership abilities and dedication to finding innovative ways to advance overall firm goals. As an adjunct professor teaching patent law at University of San Diego Law, Ms. Stout has guided and provided support for hundreds of law students as they explore their interest in intellectual property law for nearly ten years. She has been recognized as a preeminent intellectual property lawyer and leader by trade and industry outlets, previously named among the "Top 50 Influential Veteran Business Leaders" by the San Diego Business Journal.

Knobbe Martens



BRITT STROTTMAN  
Partner  
Singleton Schreiber

As an experienced litigator with over 20 years of experience representing state and local governments, Britt Strotzman leads Singleton Schreiber's Public Entity Environmental Practice Group, specializing in litigation against corporations for wrongdoing. With a diverse background in litigations spanning tobacco, sub-prime mortgages, opioid, and fire cases, including a \$1 billion settlement with PG&E for the North Bay and Campfires, her proficiency in complex litigation and resolving high-value lawsuits distinguishes her as an exceptional attorney. Britt Strotzman has represented the counties of Sonoma, Napa, Mendocino, Lake, Yuba, Butte and Nevada affected by wildfires, securing significant recoveries from PG&E. This includes \$1 billion for counties and cities affected by wildfires in 2017 and 2018, \$25.4 million for Calaveras County in a separate fire case, and \$120 million for San Bruno following a gas line explosion in 2010.



MARESA TALBERT  
Founding Attorney & CEO  
Talbert Law Office, APC

Maresa Talbert is the founder and CEO of Talbert Law Office, APC. Maresa has significant experience handling for-profit and tax-exempt entity formations; entity governance and compliance matters; disputes concerning trademarks, copyrights, domain names, and other types of intellectual property; disputes arising from contracts, fiduciary duties, and business relationships and separations. Maresa has authored articles appearing in the Association of Business Trial Lawyers Report and the San Diego Magazine. She has served as the President of the Earl B. Gilliam Bar Association, Vice Chair of the SDCBA Intellectual Property Section, and a Director on the California Western School of Law Alumni Association. Maresa currently serves as co-founder and co-chair of San Diegans for Justice and The Justice Workshop, Inc. Maresa served 14 years as a Surface Warfare Officer in the U.S. Navy and Navy Reserve. Maresa is currently licensed to practice law in California and the District of Columbia.



ELIZABETH THOMPSON  
Partner  
Allen Matkins

Elizabeth Thompson is a partner in the San Diego office of Allen Matkins and is a member of the firm's nationally renowned Real Estate group. She advises a broad range of clients on the negotiation and structuring of complex joint ventures in connection with the acquisition, disposition, and development of all asset types. Her perspective practicing in-house for companies ranging from a start-up to a global NYSE-listed life sciences REIT provides her with unique insight on client needs. Her representation of publicly and privately held clients on general corporate matters furthers her holistic approach to accomplishing client objectives in a strategic and efficient manner. Within the San Diego community, Elizabeth is involved in education-focused outreach, providing pro bono legal services to a non-profit educational institution and serving as a mentor to law students. She has been recognized as a Super Lawyers Rising Star (2023-2024).

Allen Matkins



RACHEL THOMPSON  
Partner  
Minerva Law, LLP

Rachel is a certified family law specialist and founding partner of Minerva Law, LLP. Her practice focuses on contested custody and high asset dissolution cases. Before opening Minerva Law, Rachel was a founding partner at Smith & Scatizzi, an all-female boutique firm. Rachel was the 2016-2018 President of the Junior League of San Diego and, in this role, was recognized by the California Senate for her commitment to community service. She has been a featured speaker on financial disclosure in high conflict cases, intellectual property rights under a community property regime, and planning for a stable financial future. Through her Junior League work, Rachel presented on issues facing transition-age foster youth, anti-human trafficking advocacy, and the development of women as community and civic leaders. She has shared her courtroom expertise with the next generation of lawyers as a mock trial coach at her alma mater, WashU-Law, and Coronado High School.

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Global Vice Chair  
Latham's Securities Litigation & Professional Liability Practice; Public Company & Board Representation Practice; and the firm's Training & Career Enhancement Committee

Congratulations to our partner **Colleen Smith** and all of this year's *Women of Influence in Law* honorees.

Colleen, a nationally recognized trial lawyer, embodies the talent and culture of Latham. She helps public companies successfully prevent or navigate complex litigation while also providing valuable leadership at our firm and in the local community.

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**KIMBERLY TRIMBLE**  
Partner  
Singleton Schreiber

Kimberly Trimble, a top female attorney in California, boasts extensive legal expertise highlighted by notable victories in high-profile cases, notably securing an \$85 million verdict against the County of San Diego for Lucky Phounsy's wrongful death, recognized by The Daily Journal. Kim has represented clients in cases against governmental entities and medical professionals, securing significant settlements for victims of police violence and medical malpractice, including a \$250k settlement for a protester hit by a rubber bullet and a \$1.1 million settlement for the wrongful death of a juvenile hall detainee due to a fentanyl overdose. One of Ms. Trimble's cases, Horton v. County of SD, ended in a \$250k settlement. Kim represented client who was hit with a rubber bullet while attending a protest with her college-aged children. Another recent case Arguelles v. County of SD ended in a \$1.1 million settlement. Client's son died of a fentanyl overdose while in juvenile hall in San Diego.





**JENNIFER TROWBRIDGE**  
Senior Counsel  
Procopio Cory Hargreaves & Savitch, LLP

Jennifer focuses on a wide array of corporate law, including securities law, corporate finance, mergers & acquisitions, and Exchange Act reporting and compliance. She represents public and private companies, investment funds and underwriters in regards to federal and state securities laws and investment and capital-raising transactions such as PIPEs, private equity, debt and venture capital transactions & SPACs. Her services include public and private offerings (Regulation D, etc.), registration of securities (Forms S-1, S-8, etc.), and filing compliance with mergers, acquisitions, stock and asset purchases (Forms 10-K, 10-Q, 8-K, etc.). She also assists clients such as investment advisers, broker-dealers and investment firms with registration and on-going SEC and state compliance.





**RUTHLEEN UY**  
Counsel  
Kilpatrick

Ruthleen Uy is a registered patent attorney who focuses her practice on the preparation and prosecution of patent applications in the computer, electrical, and mechanical arts including applications directed to computer architecture, computer hardware, financial technology, mobile communications, and telecommunications. Additionally, Ms. Uy has experience prosecuting applications directed to memory management including the restoration and recovery of memory data, data compression, data encryption/decryption, databases, and data storage. She also has experience in medical devices including medical image processing and radiation controls. Ms. Uy is active in the Filipino American Lawyers of San Diego, NABA-Pan Asian Lawyers of San Diego, and San Diego IP Law Association.





**PAMELA VALLERO**  
Trial Attorney  
Gruenberg Law

Pamela Vallero is a Trial Attorney at Gruenberg Law, specializing in employment matters. Vallero is a native Spanish speaker. She fights for the rights of those who have been subjected to unlawful discrimination, wrongful termination and retaliation, from all walks of life. As trial counsel in 2023, Vallero obtained a \$1.8 million jury verdict for a female TV anchor who suffered discriminatory pay disparity by her employer, KUSI. Vallero was awarded CASD's Rising Star in 2022 and was one of San Diego Super Lawyer Rising Stars in 2023 and 2024. Vallero's ability to be a commanding and effective presence in the courtroom has earned her the respect of her opponents, peers, and the bench. She is a member of the San Diego La Raza Lawyers Association, Louis M Welsh Inn of Court, Consumer Attorneys of San Diego, and more. She can be reached at [pam@gruenberglaw.com](mailto:pam@gruenberglaw.com) or 619-230-1234.





**SUE ANN VAN DERMYDEN**  
Senior Partner  
Van Dermeyden Makus Law Corporation

Sue Ann Van Dermeyden is a pioneer in the dynamic area of neutral investigations. An employment attorney since 1993, she is a founding member and managing partner of Van Dermeyden Makus Law Corporation's San Diego office where she conducts workplace and Title IX investigations and provides expert witness testimony on their adequacy. Committed to improving workplace investigations globally, she regularly lectures on investigations and employment issues. She is a founding member and past president of the Association of Workplace Investigators. Today, she serves as senior faculty at AWT's Institute, develops workplace investigation standards through the Investigations Standards Technical Committee of ASIS International, serves as co-chair of the Workplace Investigations Subcommittee with the American Bar Association, and is a shareholder of T9 Mastered, a training company for Title IX sexual assault investigators. She earned her law degree from the McGeorge School of Law.





Stark & D'Ambrosio, LLP congratulates our Family Law Partner, **Anna M. Romanskaya**, for her tremendous accomplishments and in her selection as one of the **Top Women of Influence in Law** by the **San Diego Business Journal**!



Anna M. Romanskaya, Esq.  
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• ARCHITECTURAL FIRMS

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• LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

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JULY 8

• Luxury / UTC / Downtown Apartments

JULY 8

• Property Management Companies

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**JANICE WALSHOK**  
Shareholder  
Pettit Kohn Ingrassia Lutz & Dolin

Janice Y. Walshok is a Shareholder in the firm's San Diego office whose practice focuses on transportation and personal injury matters – defending against claims involving wrongful death and product liability. Her career spans over a decade, and she has developed a strong reputation as one of San Diego's top litigators. Ms. Walshok is an accomplished trial attorney and has represented a broad spectrum of clients and nationally prominent companies defending and advising them on their most complex cases. She has successfully tried several jury trials and has argued before the Second District Court of Appeal. Ms. Walshok is co-chair and co-founder of Pettit Kohn's Diversity Equity & Inclusion committee and is also a member of the California Minority Counsel Program where she advocates and promotes diversity and inclusion within the legal profession.



**BHASHINI WEERASINGHE**  
Owner  
Law Office of Bhashini Weerasinghe

Bhashini Weerasinghe, Owner of Law Office of Bhashini Weerasinghe is a distinguished and experienced attorney who focuses on estate planning, assisting small businesses, and drafting premarital agreements. Bhashini has received several accolades for her work, she is a volunteer attorney with Community Law Project, serves as a career counselor for California Western School of Law, and is on the Board of Directors for the Children's Legal Services of San Diego. Bhashini is also very involved with the DEI Division of San Diego County Bar Association. In the past, she has served on the Board of Directors for Lawyers Club of San Diego and Women of Color in Law. She received her BA in Political Science from UC Berkeley and her JD from New England Law | Boston. In her free time, she likes to hike, take long drives, and paint.



**CHARITY WILLIAMS**  
Partner  
Cooley

Cooley partner Charity Williams represents life sciences companies in high-stakes life sciences transactions across a wide range of technologies, including medical devices, digital therapeutics, diagnostics, pharmaceuticals and cell therapies. Her unique blend of legal acumen and business insight allows her to provide sophisticated counsel for strategic collaborations, licenses, co-development and co-promotion agreements and supply and distribution agreements, as well as options to purchase and earn-out structures in the context of mergers and acquisitions. Charity is a sought-after speaker regarding life sciences transactions, and she also has held key executive roles in medical device developer companies – including chief business officer and in-house counsel for Catheter Connections, as well as interim CEO of Veritract and director of marketing for ZEVEX (Moog Medical). Beyond her legal work, Charity is committed to advancing women's leadership, having served on Athena's board.



**MEGAN WINTER**  
Partner  
Fisher Phillips

Megan spends her career defending and counseling employers in all aspects of employment law, including pay equity audits, wage and hour class and representative actions, harassment and discrimination litigation, reasonable accommodations, and family and medical leave law. She finds solutions that meet her clients' business needs and goals, whether that is developing leverage to obtain an early resolution or taking a case to trial. Megan is Co-Chair of the firm's Leaves and Accommodations Practice Group and a core member of the firm's Pay Equity Practice Group. She assists employers in developing workplace policies and procedures, and she regularly advises employers regarding day-to-day employment issues and strategies to avoid employment claims and litigation. For five years, Megan taught HR and the Law I and II classes focused on all aspects of California law at San Diego State University. She frequently provides employer supervisor trainings and conducts monthly legal updates.



**MÁRCIA YAFUSO LOEFFELHOLZ**  
Senior Partner  
Hecht Solberg Robinson Goldberg & Bagley LLP

Márcia Yafuso Loeffelholz is a Senior Partner at Hecht Solberg Robinson Goldberg & Bagley LLP. She specializes in real estate and business transaction matters, with a focus on acquisitions, dispositions, financing transactions, commercial leasing, entity formation and general business matters. Ms. Yafuso Loeffelholz handles a variety of matters, including: advising large and medium-sized developers of multi-family residential, mixed-use and commercial projects, and hotel clients to prepare and negotiate purchase and sale agreements through successful deal closing; representing clients in the formation of entities' specific needs, business planning, operation and corporate governance and general business matters; advising clients in complex purchase and sale of business entities and assets; advising borrowers in secured finance transactions; and representing non-profit organizations, including incorporating and obtaining tax-exempt qualifications.



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