



LEAGUE OF
CALIFORNIA
CITIES

Speakers' Biographies



Elizabeth Tom Arce

Liz is an accomplished advocate with experience litigating a wide array of labor and employment cases in state and federal trial and appellate courts. Liz has successfully represented employers in matters ranging from single plaintiff lawsuits to wage and hour class and collective actions. Her litigation experience includes numerous successful summary judgment motions, defeating class certification, and decertifying collective actions. Liz's litigation practice also includes handling matters in arbitration and before administrative agencies where she has been effective at obtaining favorable results for the firm's clients. When she is not defending litigation matters, Liz advises employers on a wide range of diverse employment matters such as wage and hour, disability accommodations, public safety, employee discipline, disability retirements, and anti-discrimination, harassment and retaliation laws. At the center of her employment counseling practice is auditing employer policies and practices for compliance with wage and hour laws such as the Fair Labor Standards Act. Liz is also a dynamic trainer who is motivated by her commitment to the firm's clients and her passion for employment law. She draws from her litigation experience during her presentations to educate and encourage employers to take preventative measures to reduce exposure to liability and costly litigation. In addition to presenting to the firm's consortiums, Liz also frequently speaks at regional, statewide and national conferences on a variety of employment-related topics.



Gary Bell

Gary Bell currently serves as City Attorney for the City of Auburn, Town Attorney for the Town of Yountville, and Assistant City Attorney for the City of Novato. His practice covers a range of public law issues, including elections law, land use, California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), public works contracting, contracts, franchise agreements and franchise fees, cannabis regulation and enforcement, municipal finance law, labor and employment law, constitutional law, code enforcement, conflicts of interest, open meetings and records laws, post-redevelopment issues, and matters involving Local Agency Formation Commissions (LAFCOs). Gary graduated with highest honors from UC Santa Cruz with a B.A. in psychology. He received his J.D. from the UC Davis School of Law, where he was staff editor of the UC Davis Business Law Journal. Before law school, Gary served as a Senate Fellow for the California State Senate in Sacramento, where he staffed the Senate Local Government Committee and worked on legislation of interest to California's local governments.



Kyle Brochard

Kyle Brochard is a shareholder in Richards, Watson & Gershon's Litigation Department. Kyle has wide-ranging experience representing municipalities and public agencies in both state and federal courts, with a special focus on public works and infrastructure matters, and water law-related litigation. Kyle has represented the cities of Beverly Hills, Brea, Highland, Indio, Manhattan Beach, Palmdale, Pismo Beach, Rancho Cucamonga, Seal Beach, Temecula, and Upland, as well as Indian Wells Groundwater Authority, Madera County Groundwater Sustainability Agency, and Marina Coast Water District. Prior to attending law school, Kyle worked as an advocate for disabled individuals before the Social Security Administration. During law school, he externed for the Honorable Emily Pines, New York State Supreme Court Judge for the Tenth Judicial District.



Timothy Coates

Tim Coates is a partner at the appellate firm of Greines, Martin, Stein & Richland LLP in Los Angeles, and over the past 39 years he has briefed and argued more than 350 matters in the state and federal appellate courts, including successfully arguing five cases in the United States Supreme Court, and obtaining a per curiam reversals in two other cases. Tim's Supreme Court victories have addressed absolute and qualified immunity (*Van de Kamp v. Goldstein*, 555 U.S. 335 (2009), *Messerschmidt v. Millender*, 565 U.S. 535 (2012), *Stanton v. Sims*, 571 U.S. 3 (2013); *Rivas-Villegas v. Cortesluna*, 142 S. Ct. 4 (2021)), Monell liability (*Los Angeles County v. Humphries*, 562 U.S. 29 (2010)), warrantless arrests (*County of Riverside v. McLaughlin*, 500 U.S. 44 (1991)) and Clean Water Act discharge standards (*Los Angeles County Flood Control Dist. v. N.R.D.C.*, 568 U.S. 78 (2013)). He has been named a Southern California Super Lawyer in the area of appellate practice (2007-current), and has also been named in *The Best Lawyers In America (Appellate Law)* (2014-current). The *Los Angeles Daily Journal* has repeatedly recognized Tim as one of the Top 100 Attorneys in California, he has received a California Lawyer Attorney of the Year award for his United States Supreme Court work, and Reuters News Service named him one of the "Top Petitioners" in the United States Supreme Court. Tim lectures widely on issues related to appellate practice, as well as section 1983 and government tort liability, and is currently co-chair of the International Municipal Lawyers Association (IMLA) Litigation, Insurance and Risk Management section, as well as IMLA co-chair for California.



Michael Colantuono

Michael has specialized in municipal law since 1989. He is certified by the California State Bar as a Specialist in Appellate Law and is President of the California Academy of Appellate Lawyers, an association of a bit more than 100 of the most distinguished appellate lawyers in California. He is an Elected Member of the American Law Institute, the leading independent organization in the United States producing scholarly work to clarify, modernize, and otherwise improve the law. He has argued 16 cases in the California Supreme Court and appeared in all six of the California District Courts of Appeal, as well as trial courts around the State. He serves on the California Judicial Council's Appellate Advisory Committee and its Appellate Caseload Working Group. Michael has expertise in a broad range of areas of concern to local governments in California, including constitutional law, land use regulation, open meetings, elections, municipal litigation, conflicts of interest, public utilities, LAFCO issues, inverse condemnation, cannabis regulation, and a wide range of public finance issues involving taxes, assessments, fees and charges. He is City Attorney of Grass Valley and a frequent speaker on municipal revenues and other public law topics.



Joan Cox

For over twenty years, Deirdre Joan Cox has practiced in the construction and public contracting field. Joan's practice involves representing public agencies in complex construction matters, including strategizing development and procurement approaches, drafting construction documents, including performance and payment bonds and parent guarantees, advising clients during the course of construction, claims review and analysis, and claims resolution, including mediation, arbitration, and litigation. She assists in the resolution of issues that occur at the intersections between funding, design, acquisition, and construction. She serves as special counsel to a number of local agencies and general counsel for the Olivehurst Public Utility District. She has extensive litigation experience in state and federal court. Her efforts, from a project's early stages through trial and beyond, allow public agencies to deliver public projects on time and on budget. Her experience includes multi-million-dollar projects for cities, counties, and other municipalities, including hospitals, community college, school and special districts, and other commercial facilities in myriad bond funded projects, individual projects, and capital improvement programs. She has particular experience in lease revenue bond financing, Mello-Roos bonds, public private partnerships, and other financing mechanisms. Joan has extensive experience working with public entity clients to develop construction project manuals: "front-end" construction documents for all types of public works projects using delivery methods that involve competitive bidding utilizing lowest responsive, responsible bidding and "best value" concepts for traditional hard bid / design-bid-build, design-build, construction manager at risk, and lease-leaseback delivery mechanisms. She also drafts contracts for architects, engineers and other professionals. Her work includes preparing the project documentation including drafting, negotiation, structuring of delivery and procurement approaches and risk evaluation. She also assists public entity clients in administering the bidding process and facilitating the defense and handling of bid protests, subcontractor listing, project setup, and related issues that arise during the bidding / proposal process including attending hearings and assisting in preparing findings and conclusions. Joan also has experience in inverse condemnation and California land use, development and CEQA law, having represented both private and public entities in connection with flood control disputes, water rights, and environmental impact review/mitigated negative declaration issues. Joan received her J.D. with honors from Golden Gate University School of Law. She served as a Settlement Commissioner for the Alameda County Superior Court, a fee arbitrator and a private mediator. She taught contract law at East Bay Law School for ten years. She has also taught Public Finance and Law & Economics at Golden Gate University. Over the last 12 years, Joan served as the Planning Commissioner, Councilmember, and Mayor of the City of Sausalito.



Eric Danly

Eric Danly has served as the Petaluma City Attorney since December 5, 2005, and since July 1, 2013 in an in-house capacity. Eric reports directly to the City Council and oversees the City Attorney's Office consisting of, in addition to the City Attorney, two assistant city attorneys and a legal assistant. Prior to joining Petaluma in-house Eric was a partner in the Meyers Nave law firm and managing partner of its Santa Rosa office. Eric also served as Cloverdale City Attorney, General Counsel to the Monterey County Housing Authority Development Corporation, Clearlake City Attorney and Assistant City Attorney for Pinole. Eric has delivered numerous presentations on open meetings and records law, and ethical and other laws applicable to public agency officials. He served on the League of California Cities committee that authored the organization's first published guide to the California Public Records Act, entitled "The People's Business – A Guide to the California Public Records Act." He was appointed to serve on the City Attorney's Department's standing committee on the Public Records Act when the committee was formed in September 2009 and served on the committee through April 2016. Along with his colleagues on the Public Records Act Committee, Eric helped author updates to The People's Business: A Guide to the Public Records Act, which were published 2010, 2011, 2014, and the Second Edition to The People's Business, which was published in 2017. While serving on the Public Records Act Committee Eric and his colleagues provided annual updates on the Public Records Act for the Municipal Law Handbook, in addition to providing support to Cal Cities lobbyists on Public Records Act issues and recommendations to the Legal Advocacy Committee on requests for amicus support in public records cases. Currently Eric serves as the First Vice President of the City Attorneys' Department of Cal Cities. His First Vice President duties include serving as liaison to the FPPC Committee and the Public Records Act Committee. Eric has also previously served as Chair of the Attorney Development and Succession Committee, and on the Legal Advocacy, Municipal Law Handbook, and Nominating Committees within the City Attorneys Department of Cal Cities. Eric received a BA in Interdisciplinary English from Stanford University in 1990, and his JD from University of California, Hastings College of the Law with a public law concentration in 1998. He has been practicing law representing public agencies since 1999.



Christopher Diaz

Christopher J. Diaz is a public agency attorney serving as city attorney to the towns of Coloma and Hillsborough, and district counsel for the Castro Valley Sanitary District and Stanislaus Consolidated Fire Protection District. Chris recently completed service as City Attorney to the City of Milpitas, a role he served in for seven years. Chris regularly helps his public agency clients in all areas of public agency law, including complex land use transactions, the California Environmental Quality Act, ethics laws and conflicts of interest.



Danielle Drossel

Danielle Drossel is an Associate at Oppenheimer Investigations Group LLP. Her practice is dedicated to conducting fair, timely, and thorough workplace investigations for public agencies, private companies large and small, non-profits, and educational institutions. She has handled investigations against elected officials and high-level executives. Before dedicating her practice exclusively to neutral work, Danielle worked as an attorney for 10 years, representing local government agencies and providing legal advice on a wide range of matters. Her career started in private practice defending Los Angeles County in civil rights and employment cases, before moving to county counsel positions at Los Angeles County and later Santa Barbara County, where she is currently based. She defended public entities and public officials in federal and state court, including claims arising under the Fair Employment and Housing Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, California Family Rights Act, and Family and Medical Leave Act. Danielle's diverse clientele of government employees and elected officials included social workers, county boards of supervisors, law enforcement personnel, county planning commissions, public defender attorneys, and land-use planners. Danielle believes in the adage "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Her passion for advancing peaceful workplaces, where organizations and employees can thrive, led her to OIG.



Dave Fleishman

Dave Fleishman has practiced extensively in the area of public law and in the area of labor and employment law for both public and private employers. His practice has focused on the representation of public agencies in an advisory role as city attorney or general counsel, as well as in public entity defense litigation, including writs and appeals, civil rights, Fair Labor Standards Act, wrongful termination, employment investigations, public contracting, tort claims and code enforcement. He has also represented private employers throughout California in wrongful termination, wage and hour, and other employment matters. He currently serves as City Attorney for the City of Pismo Beach and the City of Solvang. He formerly served as City Attorney for the cities of Guadalupe and Pacific Grove, and deputy city attorney for the City of Atascadero. He also previously served as assistant city attorney for the City of Morro Bay. He was formerly Assistant General Counsel for the Cambria Community Services District and the Los Osos Community Services District. He also previously served as General Counsel for the San Simeon Community Services District. He has served as special counsel for the City of Torrance and City of Seal Beach civil service commissions. He has represented over 40 cities and special districts in California and Nevada in various labor and employment matters. Prior to returning to Richards, Watson & Gershon, where he began his legal career in 1991, Dave was a partner for nearly 25 years in the law firm of Hanley & Fleishman, LLP, which focused on public agency representation throughout California.



Pamela K. Graham

Pamela Graham is Senior Counsel and a member of Colantuono, Highsmith & Whatley's litigation practice group. She also leads its public safety defense group. Pamela's practice covers a wide range of public law litigation, including municipal finance and public revenues, labor and employment law, land use and CEQA, cannabis regulation and enforcement, and police liability defense work. Pamela has broad litigation experience in both state and federal courts, handling all phases of litigation from case assessment through appeal. She has served on Cal Cities' Editorial Board for the Municipal Law Handbook for the past three years, serves on the Cal Cities Municipal Finance Committee, and also serves on the Los Angeles Bar Association's Editorial Board for its L.A. Lawyer publication. Throughout her 20-year legal career, Pamela has advocated pro bono for children's rights, working on countless adoption and education rights matters.



Bill Ihrke

Bill Ihrke is a Partner at Rutan & Tucker, LLP in the Government and Regulatory Practice Group. He currently serves as the City Attorney for La Quinta and Cerritos, and has served and continues to serve multiple cities as special counsel or as their counsel to the successor agencies to former redevelopment agencies. In representing these entities, Bill regularly attends public meetings and advises governing bodies and staff on all aspects of public agency law, including the Planning and Zoning Law, Subdivision Map Act, California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Affordable Housing and RHNA compliance, Ralph M. Brown Act (open meeting law), Public Records Act, Political Reform Act and Fair Political Practices Commission ("FPPC") regulations, Federal and State labor and employment law (including prevailing wage requirements), real estate law, contract law (including bid-construction, design-build and DBOM models of contracting), parliamentary procedure, code enforcement and implementation of post-redevelopment legislation and case decisions. He has provided the Land Use and CEQA Litigation Update several times for the City Attorney Conferences sponsored by the League of California Cities.



Gabrielle Janssens

Ms. Janssens' practice focuses on assisting clients with land use matters, development of public property, real estate transactions, and general municipal and governmental law. She advises both nonprofit housing developers and public agencies on subjects such as affordable housing requirements, accessory dwelling units, land use entitlements, and the California Environmental Quality Act. Ms. Janssens additionally has experience in all aspects of municipal law, such as the Brown Act, Public Records Act, and conflicts of interest. She has worked on many public-private transactions, including redevelopment projects and affordable housing development, and has drafted disposition and development agreements, purchase and sale agreements, development agreements, loan agreements, and affordable housing regulatory agreements and related affordable housing program documents. In her capacity as an agency attorney, Ms. Janssens has provided legal advice to Planning Commissions, City Councils and Boards of Supervisors.



Gail Karish

Gail A. Karish is a partner at Best Best & Krieger LLP who focuses on telecommunications, assisting clients in California and across the U.S. with a wide range of regulatory and transactional matters involving broadband and fiber networks, cable and telecom franchising, wireless communications and public-private partnerships. Gail's clients are mainly public agencies, such as local governments, water districts and municipal utilities. Public agencies can serve a variety of roles in relation to telecommunications infrastructure – regulator, owner, service provider, customer, partner – and Gail's clients come to her for advice and guidance on issues that arise in all these contexts. She also represents some cooperatives, nonprofits and small competitive providers. Prior to her private practice, Gail worked in-house at a Miami-based long-distance telecommunications carrier that was a subsidiary of Entel-Chile, where she was responsible for state and federal licensing and regulatory compliance matters, and corporate and commercial contracts associated with the company's launch of retail and wholesale telecommunications and Internet services serving the U.S. Hispanic market. Gail started her legal career in infrastructure in Canada at Ontario Hydro, a large government-owned electric utility. Gail frequently presents on telecommunications topics to organizations such as the International Municipal Lawyers Association, National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors and its regional chapters, League of California Cities and Alliance for Community Media. Gail is licensed in California and the District of Columbia. She was licensed but is now inactive in the Province of Ontario, Canada.

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Barbara Kautz

Barbara Kautz, FAICP, is a partner at Goldfarb & Lipman LLP. Her practice emphasizes land use laws related to housing development. Barbara worked as a planner in local government for 30 years before joining Goldfarb. Immediately prior to joining Goldfarb 15 years ago, she was the Community Development Director and Assistant City Manager for the City of San Mateo. She formerly served on the Board of Directors for the League of California Cities and the American Planning Association, California Chapter.



Lutfi Kharuf

Lutfi Kharuf is a partner in the Special Districts and Public Finance practice groups of Best Best & Krieger. Lutfi works with public agencies on compliance with constitutional and statutory limitations on imposing fees, charges and taxes, including Proposition 218 and Proposition 26. In this capacity, Lutfi assists public agencies with adopting new and increased fees, charges, assessments and taxes, as well as forming community facilities districts and assessment districts. Lutfi is based in BB&K's San Diego office and serves as chair of the firm's Recruiting Committee.



Donald Larkin

Donald A. Larkin has practiced municipal law for more than 20 years, and is currently City Attorney for the City of Morgan Hill. Prior to Morgan Hill, Mr. Larkin was Deputy County Counsel for Santa Clara County, Assistant City Attorney for the City of Palo Alto, and Deputy City Attorney for the cities of Santa Clara and Morgan Hill. Mr. Larkin has served on the City Attorney's Department CPRA Committee from 2010 to 2012, and from 2017 to present. He currently chairs the committee. As a member of the committee, Mr. Larkin has co-presented two legal practicums and an Essential Hour on the CPRA.

**Robert Lennox**

As the Assistant City Manager for the City of Carson, Robert provides oversight to the Community Services/Parks and Recreation, Information Technology, Public Safety, Emergency Services, Public Information Office, City Council Support, and Human Resources Departments. Robert brings 25 years of public service in municipalities both large and small. He has a passion for empowering communities to become more involved in their neighborhoods through meaningful leisure activities, economic development, public safety, and DEI. He has served the communities of Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino, Yucaipa, and Menifee during his local government career. Robert earned his Masters of Arts in Community Leadership/Youth Agency Administration at California State University, Los Angeles; and his Bachelors of Arts in Ethnic Studies at University of California, San Diego. He is also a proud graduate of the Southern California Coro Fellows Program in Public Affairs. He has published in the Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance and the Coro Southern California Leadership Review and presented at the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity (NCORE) and at CPRS and SCMAF annual conferences. Robert is currently pursuing his doctoral degree in Organizational Change and Leadership from the University of Southern California, Rossier School of Education. His dissertation research focuses on diversity management in local government. Robert has received many awards and certifications, including the League of California Cities' Helen Putnam Award of Excellence, International Nations in Bloom Award with the City of Los Angeles, and twice received the KaBoom Playful Cities USA award with previous agencies.



Dawn McIntosh

Dawn McIntosh represents all City departments on issues pertaining to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and other environmental matters, land use, real estate and contract documents, planning and development services, the Public Records Act, the Brown Act and may other matters relating to municipal operations. Ms. McIntosh also oversees the Harbor Department and Litigation Divisions of the City Attorney's Office. Prior to joining the Long Beach City Attorney's Office, Ms. McIntosh was Senior Of Counsel at Meyers Nave where she successfully handled many litigation matters in state and federal courts, including appeals, and assisted municipal clients with transactional matters involving environmental, land use, constitutional issues (particularly First and Fifth Amendment issues), water rights and other regulatory issues. Ms. McIntosh also spent six years as an Attorney Advisor with NOAA General Counsel's office, advising the National Marine Fisheries Service on issues relating to the Endangered Species Act, NEPA, the Administrative Procedures Act, water rights and other related issues throughout California and Hawaii. Ms. McIntosh was named one of the "Top Women Lawyers" in California for 2016 by the Daily Journal. Ms. McIntosh is a member of the State Bar of California and is admitted to practice in all federal district courts in California, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, and the United States Supreme Court. She is also a member of the Los Angeles County Bar Association. Ms. McIntosh received her law degree from the University of California, Davis, in 1992, where she served as an editor for *Environs*, the environmental law and policy journal, and served as Chair of the Moot Court Board. She received a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Maryland, College Park, in 1989.



Joseph Montes

Joe has been at Burke, Williams & Sorensen since he was a summer clerk in 1993. He currently serves as the City Attorney for Alhambra, San Marino and Santa Clarita.



Charles Parkin

Long Beach City Attorney Charlie Parkin has over 37 years of experience working for the City of Long Beach and has held the position of City Attorney since 2013. Mr. Parkin was elected Long Beach City Attorney in 2014 and again in 2018. Mr. Parkin graduated cum laude from Pacific Coast University, School of Law and received his Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration from California State University, Long Beach. Charlie is a lifelong Long Beach resident.



T. Peter Pierce

Peter demystifies the appeals process. A creative advocate, he analyzes a case from every angle to help litigators position the case most effectively for appeal. Peter represents individuals, businesses, non-profit corporations, and public agencies in appellate courts and trial courts throughout California. He is one of only 135 attorneys admitted to the California Academy of Appellate Lawyers, and is certified as a specialist in appellate law by the State Bar of California. Peter has been selected by his peers in California 13 times as a Super Lawyer in appellate law. Peter's appellate practice has been recognized by his peers four times in Best Lawyers in America. Peter has briefed and argued more than 150 appeals and writs. He represents a diverse group of clients on appeal, including non-profit and for-profit corporations, businesses, entertainment industry talent, medical professionals, real estate investors, local elected officials, and numerous cities in California on a wide range of issues affecting local governments. Before attending law school, Peter was a radio and television news reporter and copy writer. Immediately following law school, Peter served one year as a law clerk to a federal judge of the United States District Court in New Orleans.



Alana Rotter

Alana Rotter is a certified appellate specialist adept at handling appeals and writ petitions for public entities. Clients and their lawyers seek her out for her clear writing, thorough research, and efficiency. Alana also collaborates on cases in the trial court, where she assists with dispositive motions and preserving issues for appeal. Ranked by Chambers as an “Up and Coming” appellate litigator, Alana clerked for Judge Kermit Lipez of the United States Court of Appeals for the First Circuit and graduated from Yale Law School.



Nadia Sarkis

Nadia Sarkis helps public entities, businesses and trial counsel win on appeal, and enjoys collaborating with clients to address all aspects of the appellate process objectively and strategically. Ms. Sarkis has briefed and argued many appeals before the California Court of Appeal and Ninth Circuit, and secured a per curiam reversal in the U.S. Supreme Court during the 2021 term. She has significant experience as amicus counsel before the Ninth Circuit and U.S. Supreme Court, and regularly presents at conferences on municipal law issues. She started her legal career with two appellate clerkships, for Ferdinand F. Fernandez of the United States Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and Chief Justice Mary Mullarkey of the Colorado Supreme Court.



Sean SeLegue

Sean SeLegue is a Chambers-ranked appellate partner at Arnold & Porter in San Francisco. He began his career in appellate law in 1991 with a clerkship for Judge Cynthia Holcomb Hall of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. Since then, he has handled appeals in many areas, including Government Code Section 1099, energy law, products liability, real estate, partnership disputes, securities law, contract law and high-asset community property disputes. He is a certified appellate specialist, State Bar of California, a member and officer of the selective California Academy of Appellate Lawyers and a member of the invitation-only American Academy of Appellate Lawyers. Mr. SeLegue graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, School of Law in 1991.



Geoffrey S. Sheldon

Geoff is the Chair of the firm's Public Safety Practice Group, and he is also one of the firm's seasoned litigators. Geoff regularly provides advice and counsel and representation to firm clients on a wide array of matters, including matters involving the Peace Officers Bill of Rights Act, the Firefighters Bill of Rights Act, the Fair Labor Standards Act, the California Labor Code, Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the Fair Employment and Housing Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Confidentiality of Medical Information Act, the Military and Veterans Code, the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, the California and United States Constitutions, the California Public Records Act and similar claims. Geoff is an expert in defending firm clients in traditional employment litigation as well as class and collective action lawsuits involving thousands of employees. He has successfully represented firm clients in FLSA collective actions through trial and appeal, and he has successfully defeated class certification in many of these lawsuits. Geoff has also successfully handled class actions alleging violations of the FEHA brought by the DFEH and individual employees. Geoff's litigation practice extends to handling federal and state writs, injunctions and appeals. He has successfully argued cases in front of the California Court of Appeal, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and the California Supreme Court. As a member of Litigation Practice Group Executive Committee, Geoff helps establish the firm's litigation policies and best practices. As the Chair of the firm's Public Safety Practice Group he oversees the firm's extensive public safety practice. In addition, to help establishing best practices for service to the firm's public safety clients, Geoff routinely assists public agency clients and law enforcement and fire service executive associations with matters such as personnel management, investigation and discipline, unfair labor practices, grievances, medical and other types of leaves of absence, fitness for duty and disability accommodation, and public safety retirement issues.



Sunny Soltani

Sunny Soltani is a senior partner and a founding member of the firm. Sunny serves as the first female City Attorney to the City of Carson and is General Counsel to Carson Successor Agency, Carson Housing Authority, and the Carson Reclamation Authority. Her litigation victories include eight significant published opinions, arguing before the California Supreme Court, appearing in the United States Supreme Court, dismissal of two lawsuits saving a city client \$110 million, a jury trial involving right to take challenges and 21 consolidated cases on the cleanup of a former oil field (saving that client \$18 million), and most recently a victory preserving rent control for low-income residents in California. She serves her clients in an advisory role on all public law matters. Sunny also assists her clients in legislative solutions, successfully amending portions of the Government and Health & Safety Code provisions to provide more clarity in favor of her clients and the public. Sunny was the lead in negotiating and putting together a deal to bring the NFL back to Los Angeles – involving a complex \$1.8 billion transaction. She was the Assistant City Attorney in Bell when two partners in her firm won the California Lawyer “Attorneys of the Year” award in Municipal Law in 2015 for helping Bell return to responsible government and solvency after the malfeasance of eight city officials. Within three years her team returned Bell to a sound fiscal basis by eliminating \$78 million in claims against the City and recovering over \$10 million in damages. Sunny has been invited and has served as a speaker on several occasions for Lorman Education on “Litigation Skills for the Legal Profession.” She has also been a speaker at the annual California Bar Association Conference on “conflict of interest” issues. She has served as special counsel on land use issues, including subdivisions and regulatory takings cases, to the Cities of Chino, Palm Desert and Palm Springs. Sunny assists her clients with general plans and codes, zoning, public parks, subdivisions and complex real property acquisitions and conveyances. She regularly assists her municipal clients with the Political Reform Act (conflicts of interest), Brown Act (public meeting laws), Public Records Act and elections laws. Sunny has successfully negotiated various Remedial Action Plans with DTSC and the Regional Water Board. She also successfully represented her clients in various CEQA challenges to development plans and/or general plan amendments. Sunny represented a Water District in Sacramento, where the County of Sacramento was challenging the Water District’s authority to issue bonds and certificates of participating in the amount of \$25 million. Sunny obtained a favorable ruling for the Water District in the very early stages of the proceedings. She obtained a ruling dismissing, with prejudice, thirteen of the County’s fourteen causes of action against the Water District, thereby enabling the District to proceed with the issuance of bonds. In 2013, she took the lead in assisting Carson in restoring important regulatory powers back to cities by the passage of SB 510 signed into law by Governor Brown. SB 510 was enacted after a decade of court battles up and down the state involving more than 25 municipalities and a veritable host of mobile home park owners. Sunny graduated from Loyola Law School, magna cum laude, in 2000 where she was inducted into the Order of the Coif. Sunny received two B.A.’s with honors and great distinction from University of California Los Angeles in 1997. In 1999, Sunny clerked for the Honorable Stephen Reinhardt in United States Court of Appeals, Ninth Circuit.



Matthew Summers

Matthew Summers is a Shareholder in Colantuono, Highsmith & Whatley, PC with eleven years of extensive experience representing cities and other public agencies in every aspect of municipal law. His experience includes serving as Ojai City Attorney since 2015, as Calabasas City Attorney since 2021, and previously as Assistant City Attorney and Planning Commission Counsel since 2012, and as Barstow City Attorney since 2021, and previously as Assistant City Attorney since 2012. His practice covers the full range of public law issues.



Vida Thomas

Vida Thomas is a Partner and Co-Owner of Oppenheimer Investigations Group. An AV-rated attorney, Vida has practiced employment law for over 25 years, and spent much of that time advising employers on all aspects of employment law and human resources management. Over the years she also developed a substantial workplace investigations practice. Vida has conducted hundreds of workplace investigations, and teaches human resources professionals how to conduct effective workplace investigations. She also conducts inherent bias and diversity and inclusion training for private and public sector employers. Clients have complimented Vida's knack for making the law accessible, explaining complex legal concepts in a way that is both thorough and easy to understand. She believes training is most effective when it provides concrete, useful tips for navigating today's complicated and highly regulated workplace. She also serves as an expert witness in state and federal employment lawsuits and mediates litigation and non-litigation matters. Vida assists parties and attorneys in resolving employment claims, and routinely conducts sexual harassment prevention training (including AB1825 compliance training) for state agencies and private companies. Before joining Oppenheimer Investigations Group, Vida was an Of Counsel attorney with Stoel Rives LLP and Weintraub Tobin Chediak Coleman Grodin Law Corporation. She began her legal career as an employment litigator at Kronick Moskowitz and then co-founded Carlsen Thomas, LLP, a boutique employment law firm that offered workplace investigations and employee training throughout California for 13 years.



Peter M. Thorson

Mr. Thorson has over 40 years of experience in municipal law. He currently serves as City Attorney for the Cities of Temecula and Jurupa Valley in Riverside County. As an experienced City Attorney Mr. Thorson is exceptionally skilled in managing the complex legal affairs of cities and in coordinating the multi-disciplinary teams of attorneys necessary to effectively and efficiently protect the interests of the city and accomplish its goals. Mr. Thorson is an expert in municipal governance, including Brown Act, Political Reform Act, and Public Records Act. Mr. Thorson has extensive expertise in the entitlement process for large complex planned developments. His land development work includes the preparation of development agreements, specific plans, CEQA documents, development fee ordinances, and infrastructure financing, as well as litigation involving land use projects. In addition to his experience as a City Attorney, Mr. Thorson also has extensive litigation experience in civil rights, land use, police practices, public works, and personal injury cases. He has argued numerous cases in the courts of appeal and a First Amendment case before the California Supreme Court.



Kelly Trujillo

Ms. Kelly Trujillo currently serves as an Assistant City Attorney for the City of Napa. Her in-house public entity experience is extensive, most recently staffing the cities of Livermore and Vallejo for a combined ten years. Kelly specializes in litigation and litigation management. Her advisory practice focuses on providing advice and counsel to the police department, human resources, housing division and risk management. Kelly is a current member of the League's California Public Records Act committee. Additionally, she is the Mentor Coordinator for the Jesse Bethel High School Law Academy in Vallejo. Her past roles include serving as an Executive Committee Member of the Alameda County Bar Association, Public Entity Section and as a Past President of the Solano County Bar Association. Kelly received her bachelor's degree from UC Davis and graduated from Lewis & Clark Law School, with honors.