



LEAGUE OF
**CALIFORNIA
CITIES**

Speakers' Biographies

Jason Alcala

City Attorney, Livermore

Jason R. Alcala has been practicing municipal law for 30 years and is the City Attorney for the City of Livermore. Before that, he was an Assistant City Attorney for the cities of Chino and Coachella, and a Deputy City Attorney for the City of Thousand Oaks. He has been frequent speaker and author for the League of California Cities, as well as ICMA and CACEO.

Taylor Anderson

Assistant City Attorney, Calabasas and Ojai, and Senior Counsel, Colantuono, Highsmith & Whatley, PC

Taylor Anderson is Senior Counsel at Colantuono, Highsmith & Whatley, PC in the firm's municipal advisory practice group out of the Pasadena office. She has dedicated her practice to representing cities and government agencies since 2017. She serves as the Assistant City Attorney and Planning Commission Counsel for the City of Ojai and a Deputy City Attorney for the City of Barstow.

Her general counsel practice covers the full range of public law issues, including: elections, public works and public contracting, cannabis regulation, conflicts of interest, government ethics, open meetings and public records laws, commission and public meeting management, land use and planning, CEQA, sustainability and environmental policies, local emergencies, and other state and federal laws governing cities. Taylor graduated from Vanguard University in 2006 with a B.A. in English. She received her J.D. in 2016 from Pacific Coast University School of Law, where she graduated as valedictorian.

Practice Areas: Public Law • Elections Law • Government Ethics and Conflicts of Interest • Brown Act • Public Records Act • Public Contracting Law • Cannabis Regulation and Permitting • Land Use and Planning • Redistricting • Local Emergencies

Mark J. Austin

Partner, Burke, Williams & Sorensen, LLP

Mark Austin is a partner at the law firm of Burke, Williams & Sorensen, LLP, where his practice focuses on public-entity litigation, real estate litigation, corporate/partnership disputes, land-use and environmental litigation, and municipal tort defense (including dangerous condition cases, employment-related torts, and wrongful death matters). Mark has extensive trial experience, having handled multiple successful jury trials, bench trials, and arbitrations, and has successfully argued before the California Court of Appeal over a dozen times.

Mitesh Bhakta

Senior Assistant City Attorney, Mountain View

Mitesh is a local government attorney who is passionate about technology, best practices, preparing his clients for the government of tomorrow.

James E. "Jeb" Brown

Partner, Liebert Cassidy Whitmore

James E. "Jeb" Brown is a Senior Counsel in the Los Angeles office of Liebert Cassidy Whitmore, where he assists a wide-range of public entity clients in high-stakes litigation matters. As a former City of Riverside Supervising Deputy City Attorney and Riverside County Chief Assistant County Counsel, Jeb regularly oversaw complex issues such as tort defense litigation matters, personnel advisory services, and general risk management issues.

Jeb has an extensive background working with public safety agencies, providing advice on labor and employment issues and representing public agencies and their employees in both state and federal court. He served as the City of Riverside's Legal Advisor to Public Safety (Police and Fire) and as Chief Assistant County Counsel for Riverside County, represented public safety departments including the Probation Department, Fire Department and Sheriff's Department.

Jeb is a Past President and board member of the Leo A. Deegan Inn of Court and the Inland Empire Federal Bar Association. He was an adjunct professor at Laverne School of Law (Civil Rights, First Amendment, Federal Courts and Conflict of Laws). Jeb was a former Lawyer Representative to the Ninth Circuit and currently serves the Federal Court as an Attorney Settlement Officer. Jeb is also a Fellow of the International Municipal Lawyers Association and is a Certified ADA Coordinator, with certificates in employment and public safety. Finally, Jeb is also the Assistant Executive Director of the Americans for Effective Law Enforcement (AELE)."

Thomas Brown

Of Counsel, Burke, Williams & Sorensen, LLP

Thomas Brown has been with Burke since 2010. He served for eight years as the City Attorney for the City of St. Helena, and 12 years as the City Attorney for the City of Napa, prior to which he served as Senior Deputy City Attorney for the City of Berkeley.

Tom represents public agency clients. His practice focuses on all aspects of municipal law. He has extensive experience advising clients and litigating in land use, zoning and planning, the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA"), real property entitlements, police power, charter cities, municipal taxation, Brown Act, Public Records Act, code enforcement, intergovernmental relations, grand juries, elections, initiatives, and referenda.

Tom has successfully litigated several cases involving issues under California's open meetings law, the Brown Act. He has provided training under the Brown Act and the Public Records Act, including for the League of California Cities at its annual New Mayors and Councilmembers orientation meeting each January. He has frequently provided ethics training under AB 1234.

Tom was a visiting professor at Sonoma State University where he taught "California Land Use Law." He is a past President of the City Attorneys Department of the League of California Cities."

Johanna N. Canlas

City Attorney, Coronado and Solana Beach, Partner, Burke, Williams & Sorensen LLP

Johanna Canlas serves as City Attorney for the cities of Solana Beach and Coronado. Johanna served as the General Counsel to Solana Energy Alliance (SEA), the first Community Choice Energy program in the San Diego region prior to its merger into Clean Energy Alliance (CEA). Johanna represents clients in all matters affecting public agency governance, from day- to-day decision-making and operations to long-term policy implementation. These include land use, zoning and planning, environmental review and compliance, public contracting, labor and employment, real estate transactions, and intergovernmental relations. Johanna is active with CalCities (League of California Cities). She was an inaugural member of the City Attorney's Department Emergency Response Committee. She also served as the San Diego County Division Representative to the Legal Advocacy Committee. She is a past president of the City Attorneys Association of San Diego.

Michael Colantuono

Shareholder, Colantuono, Highsmith & Whatley, PC

Michael G. Colantuono is a shareholder of Colantuono, Highsmith & Whatley, a municipal law firm with offices around California. He is an experienced expert witness on public agency matters and an experienced local government lawyer. Chief Justice Ronald M. George presented him with the 2010 Public Lawyer of the Year award on behalf of the California State Bar. The Los Angeles Daily Journal named him one of "California's Top Municipal Lawyers." The California Supreme Court appointed him Chair of the Board of Trustees of the State Bar of California; he was previously Bar President. 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. The State Bar has certified Michael as an Appellate Specialist and he is Past President of the California Academy of Appellate Lawyers, a prestigious association of about 125 of California's most distinguished appellate advocates. He serves on the Judicial Council's Appellate Advisory Committee, which advises the governing body of California's judicial branch on rules, policies, and issues affecting our appellate courts.

Michael is one of California's leading experts on municipal revenues and has appeared in all six Courts of Appeal in California. In addition, he has argued more than a dozen public law cases in the California Supreme Court since 2004 — perhaps more than any other lawyer in private practice in recent years.

Michael is City Attorney of Grass Valley and general counsel of LAFCOs and special districts and previously served seven other cities and many special districts. He serves as special counsel to counties, cities and special districts around California.

Michael served as President of the City Attorneys Department of the League of California Cities in 2003–2004 and established its first Ethics Committee. He was a Director of Cal Cities in 2021–2023.

He served on the Commission on Local Governance in the 21st Century, the recommendations of which led to substantial revisions of the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act.

Michael graduated magna cum laude from Harvard College with a degree in Government and received his law degree from the University of California, Berkeley School of Law where he graduated first in his class.

He frequently posts comments on local government and municipal finance topics to LinkedIn ([Michael Colantuono](#)).

Derek Cole

City Attorney, Oakley and Sutter Creek, Partner, Cole Huber LLP

Derek Cole is a partner of Cole Huber LLP. He is the City Attorney for the Cities of Antioch, Oakley, and Sutter Creek. His practice focuses on municipal law and litigation.

Claire Collins

Partner, Hanson Bridgett

Claire Collins is a partner at Hanson Bridgett LLP. She serves as General Counsel to Irvine Ranch Water District, Trabuco Canyon Water District, and Vallejo Flood & Wastewater District, and as special counsel to a variety of other agencies across California on issues of public revenues, real estate, joint powers authorities, and ethics. She has practiced in or led public agency general counsel teams for more than 20 years.

Anthony Condotti

City Attorney, Santa Cruz and Managing Partner, Atchison, Barisone & Condotti

Anthony Condotti is Managing Partner of Atchison, Barisone & Condotti. He serves as City Attorney for the City of Santa Cruz, as General Counsel to a number of public entity clients in Santa Cruz, Monterey, Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties, and as special counsel to cities throughout California. He graduated from the University of Colorado at Boulder in 1987 and from the University of California Los Angeles School of Law in 1990.

Ann Marie Council

Senior Deputy City Attorney, San Diego

Ann Marie Council is a Senior Deputy City Attorney at the San Diego City Attorney's Office. After serving as a prosecutor for nearly 20 years, she now serves as legal counsel for city departments seeking access to care for vulnerable individuals endlessly cycling through the streets, hospitals and jails. This is done under the umbrella of San Diego's LIFT Program (Lifesaving Interventions for Treatment), which uses a medical-social-legal partnership to address these challenging issues. When no less restrictive options are available, legal intervention can include initiating a CARE Act or conservatorship petition. Ann Marie has a degree in Sociology from UC San Diego and a law degree from California Western School of Law. Her legal experience includes criminal, collaborative courts, gun violence restraining order, CARE Act, conservatorship, social security, and special education law.

Dolores B. Dalton

Partner, Goldfarb & Lipman LLP

Dolores Bastian Dalton is a partner at Goldfarb Lipman, LLP. She has extensive experience litigating and mediating land use, housing, public entity, enforcement, nonprofit and commercial disputes in state and federal trial courts, and on appeal. Ms. Dalton has been certified by the State Bar of California as a specialist in appellate law. Ms. Dalton is also a trained mediator and a member of the mediation panels for the California Court of Appeal for the Third and Sixth Districts. She has successfully mediated numerous complex civil and land use disputes. She has specialized expertise in writ of mandate and summary judgment practice.

Ms. Dalton was appointed an Adjunct Professor at the University of San Francisco School of Law, where she taught Practical Litigation Skills. She has also taught in the University of California Berkeley's Fall Program for Freshmen. Ms. Dalton has participated in numerous panels addressing the Legislature's recent revisions to the Housing Accountability Act, the Housing Element Law, and related issues.

Ms. Dalton is the former chair of the City of Albany Planning Commission. She has also been a member of former California Senator and Assemblywoman Nancy Skinner's A.D. 14 "Women of the Year" committee. She volunteers for the Sonoma County Lawyers in the Library Program, and is the Vice-President of The Mediation Society of San Francisco. Ms. Dalton sits as a Judge Pro Tem for the San Francisco and Sonoma Superior Courts.

Mara Elliott

City Attorney, Retired

Mara Elliott served as the elected San Diego City Attorney between 2016 and 2024, and recently termed out office. She is the first woman, and the first Latina, elected to her position. On taking office, Mara launched San Diego's pioneering Gun Violence Restraining Order program to stop senseless violence by keeping guns out of the hands of dangerous people.

During her tenure, her office trained more than 500 law enforcement agencies and attorneys on gun violence prevention. Her programs have been replicated throughout the United States. In addition, as City Attorney, Mara relaunched the San Diego Family Justice Center to bolster support for victims of domestic violence and expand its services to victims of sex trafficking.

Mara is recognized as a fierce champion for consumers and the environment, and a staunch protector of victims of domestic violence and sex trafficking. She gained a reputation for standing up to special interests, safeguarding taxpayer dollars, and advancing programs that keep our most vulnerable citizens safe, particularly elders who face abuse and exploitation. Mara is the daughter of a longshoreman father and immigrant mother, and the first in her family to graduate from college, attending UC Santa Barbara and McGeorge School of Law.

Always dedicated to public service, Mara served as legal counsel to public schools, the transit district, and the County of San Diego and was a Chief Deputy City Attorney before winning election in 2016.

Elena Gerli

Partner, Burke, Williams & Sorensen LLP

Elena Gerli has spent her entire legal career representing public entities. Her areas of expertise include legislative drafting, housing, zoning and land use, CEQA, general plan amendments, free speech and constitutional law, complex contract negotiation and drafting, code enforcement, states of emergency, and landslides. Elena also advises her municipal clients regarding the Political Reform Act (conflicts of interest), Brown Act (public meeting laws), Public Records Act, elections laws, revenue measures and Proposition 218.

Elena currently serves as counsel for the Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority and the Burbank-Glendale-Pasadena Regional Housing Trust, as well as the Assistant City Attorney for the City of Lawndale, and Special Counsel for the City of Culver City. Elena has also served as the City Attorney for the City of Suisun City and the City of Rancho Palos Verdes, and as Assistant City Attorney for the City of La Cañada Flintridge, the City of Bell, and the City of Carson.

Elena has negotiated and drafted development agreements, exclusive negotiating agreements, and disposition and development agreements on behalf of cities. She has worked on general plans and specific plans, zoning code and housing regulations, as well as affordable housing agreements."

Nicole Gordon

Principal, Meyers Nave

Throughout California, clients rely on Nicole for her strategic counsel on public infrastructure projects, renewable energy projects, commercial and residential developments, and a wide range of entitlement matters. Nicole's practice centers on navigating intricate legal frameworks, including the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the federal and California Endangered Species Act (ESA), as well as planning and zoning regulations. She represents clients at every stage of the process, from administrative proceedings to trial and appellate litigation.

Michael Guina

City Attorney, Burlingame

Michael Guina is the City Attorney for the City of Burlingame, appointed in 2021. He previously served as the City Attorney for the City of Emeryville from 2015 – 2021. Michael advises the City Council, Commissions and Committees, staff on a wide variety of municipal affairs. He has extensive experience with land use, zoning, and housing matters; CEQA; complex real estate transactions; and environmental remediation and regulatory proceedings. He regularly advises on the Brown Act, Public Records Act, conflicts, and ethics.

Michael welcomes all conference attendees to the City of Burlingame!

Donald Hester

Cybersecurity Advisor, Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA)

Donald Hester is a cybersecurity advocate who has worked to make the world cybersafe in his roles as a cybersecurity auditor, educator, and cybersecurity manager for the past 25 years. Donald joined the Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) in 2023. He currently serves as a cybersecurity advisor in San Francisco and covers Northern California. Prior to CISA, Donald was the cybersecurity manager at City of Livermore, managing governance, risk, and compliance to ensure Livermore was cyber safe.

Prior to Livermore, Donald gained more than 20 years of experience as an IT auditor and cybersecurity director at Maze & Associates. He has taught IT and cybersecurity courses for a number of universities and colleges.

Donald has a master's degree from Biola University and a bachelor's degree in Security Management from American Military University. Donald's professional certifications include; CISSP, CISA, CGRC, CRISC, Security+, CTT+, and MOFF. Donald is a Marine Veteran and started his career as a field radio operator.

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/donaldehester/>

Andrew Janz

City Attorney Fresno

Andrew Janz was appointed City Attorney in December 2022 and oversees an office of 37 attorneys and 130 support staff including code enforcement employees. Janz has been credited with partnering with Attorney General Rob Bonta in implementing a cannabis prosecution program that seeks to curtail black market cannabis sales that has stifled legitimate cannabis industry. He is also tasked with prosecuting wage theft within the City of Fresno in collaboration with the Department of Industrial Relations.

Prior to joining the City Attorney's Office, Andrew served at the Fresno County District Attorney's Office where he was a Deputy District Attorney. While there, Andrew prosecuted various types of cases including violent crimes and sexual assaults. Before becoming a prosecutor, Andrew clerked for District Court Judge Carolyn Ellsworth in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Andrew attended Southwestern Law School in Los Angeles where he obtained his juris doctor degree. During law school, Andrew served on Law Review and was a summer associate at Merleker and Mielke an international law firm in Berlin, Germany. He is also a graduate of California State University, Stanislaus where he received a Bachelor's Degree in Economics and a Master's Degree in Public Administration. During graduate school, Andrew was selected to attend former CIA Director Leon Panetta's Institute of Public Policy in Monterrey, California.

Andrew is married to Heather Walker Janz who is a marriage and family therapist. The two have a daughter, Wilhelmina Janz. Andrew enjoys cooking Thai food for friends and family and watching English Premier League soccer."

Andrew Jared

City Attorney, Yreka, Montague and Etna, and Senior Counsel, Colantuono, Highsmith & Whatley, PC

Andrew has counseled clients on addressing enforcement, clean-up and housing solutions related to homelessness issues for over ten years. He currently serves as City Attorney to Yreka, Montague, and Etna, and Town Attorney to Fort Jones. He has previously served as City Attorney for Chico, South Pasadena, and Assistant City Attorney for the City of Pomona. He specializes in Land Use issues and has taught Land Use Law at the undergraduate and graduate levels. He holds a J.D. from Pepperdine School of Law, an M.Sc. from Wye College, and a B.A. from UCLA.

Rick Jarvis

Partner Jarvis Fay LLP

Rick Jarvis is one of California's leading land use and public law litigators. With over three decades of experience, Rick has litigated hundreds of cases in California and federal courts, primarily defending cities and other public agencies against claims brought under CEQA, the Planning and Zoning Law, the Mitigation Fee Act, the Subdivision Map Act, and other land use and municipal laws, as well as regulatory takings and landowner civil rights claims. Rick also advises his clients on land use issues during the planning and public hearing process, reviewing and "bullet-proofing" CEQA documentation and working with city attorneys and planning staff in order to minimize litigation risks in the first place. Rick is active with the League of California Cities, including preparation of several amicus briefs and frequent presentations at its conferences and webinars. Rick has extensive experience handling writs (at both the trial and appellate levels) and appeals, and is a Certified Specialist in Appellate Law by the State Bar of California Board of Legal Specialization. For nearly every year since 2006, Rick has been selected by Law & Politics for inclusion in its annual list of "Super Lawyers" in Northern California, which seeks to list the top 5% of lawyers in Northern California through a process of independent evaluation and peer review.

Arvi Kaur

Deputy City Attorney, Sacramento

Arvinder ("Arvi") Kaur is a Deputy City Attorney at the Sacramento City Attorney's Office. As general counsel for the City's Department of Community Response, she advises on all issues related to homeless services and outreach. She also provides advice related to conflicts of interest issues, open government laws, and public contracting. Prior to joining the Sacramento City Attorney's Office, Arvi was an associate at Olson Remcho, where her practice focused on compliance with campaign finance laws, lobbying registration and disclosure, elections, and conflicts of interest. Arvi is a graduate of the University of California, Berkeley (B.A.) and the University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law (J.D.).

Michelle Marchetta Kenyon

City Attorney, Pacifica, Rohnert Park, Piedmont, Calistoga, Moraga and Partner, Burke Williams & Sorensen, LLP

Michelle Kenyon provides legal representation for cities and other public agencies as city attorney and special counsel. Michelle currently serves as City Attorney for the cities of Rohnert Park, Calistoga, Piedmont and Pacifica, Town Attorney for the Town of Moraga, and Special Counsel to several cities in the Bay Area.

She previously has served as Acting/Interim City Attorney for many cities including the City of Redwood City, Daly City, Pleasant Hill, and the Town of Danville. Her practice includes advising city councils and staff in all areas of municipal law issues such as annexation procedures, bidding and claims procedures, CEQA, code enforcement, conflicts of interest laws, contract review, elections, Government Tort Claims Act, initiatives, referenda, land use and planning, municipal finance, open meeting laws, personnel, Proposition 218, and water supply assessments.

Michelle's other areas of specialty include land use litigation and appellate advocacy. She is experienced in both state and federal trial and appellate courts, including written appearances in the U.S. Supreme Court. She has successfully served as lead attorney in litigation involving CEQA, inverse condemnation, election law, civil rights, Proposition 218 and rent control, with several outcomes garnering published decisions.

Gideon Kracov

Mediator, ADR Services, Inc.

Gideon Kracov is a distinguished mediator with thirty years of experience in environmental, real estate and civil matters.

His experience includes serving as a Deputy Los Angeles City Attorney in the Real Property Division, where he counseled the Departments of Planning and Sanitation on public works and real estate projects and successfully defended the City in high-stakes trials. Notably, he helped negotiate a \$168 million settlement for the removal of trash from the Los Angeles River and advised on the City's property redevelopment initiatives. In addition, Mr. Kracov led civil prosecutions in the City Attorney's Environmental Protection Unit.

He is the former Chair of the California Lawyers Association Environmental Law Section, Executive Committee. As a member of the adjunct faculty at Loyola Law School, he teaches land use law and regulation.

Mr. Kracov served as the Governor's appointee to the California Air Resources Board (CARB), the state's lead air pollution and climate change regulatory agency. He also served as the Governor's appointee to the South Coast Air Quality Management District Governing Board.

Jordan Lowery

Deputy City Attorney , Sacramento

Jordan Lowery is a Deputy City Attorney at the Sacramento City Attorney's Office. Lowery serves as counsel to the public safety departments and is one of the primary resources for advising City departments responsible for managing our population of people experiencing homelessness. Prior to joining the Sacramento City Attorney's Office, Jordan worked at the City of San Diego and County of Shasta where she handled various labor and employment law issues, conservatorship hearings and trials, implementation of CARE Court, bail bond motions, contracts, records requests, and felony cases.

Dawn McIntosh

City Attorney, Long Beach

Dawn McIntosh was elected Long Beach City Attorney on June 7, 2022. City Attorney Dawn McIntosh has over 30 years of legal experience with both public entities and in private practice, where she represented cities and governmental agencies. Throughout her career, Ms. McIntosh handled many litigation matters in state and federal courts, including appeals. She also has extensive experience advising municipalities on environmental, land use, water rights, Tidelands and constitutional issues, myriad regulatory issues, Brown Act and Public Records Act compliance, and other transactional matters.

Ms. McIntosh joined the City of Long Beach in 2016, where she initially handled a wide variety of legal issues for the Port of Long Beach, but then went on to advise many other City departments on a multitude of legal issues. In July of 2021, Ms. McIntosh was promoted to Assistant City Attorney, overseeing the Harbor and Litigation divisions of the office.

In 2016, Ms. McIntosh was named one of the top women Attorneys in California. Ms. McIntosh is the first woman to hold the office of Long Beach City Attorney.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Ms. McIntosh is admitted to practice in California and before the United States District Courts for the Central District, the Eastern District and the Northern District, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeal and the United States Supreme Court. Ms. McIntosh is a member of the California State Bar Association and the Long Beach Bar Association. Ms. McIntosh is also a member of the City Attorney Association of Los Angeles County and Long Beach Rotary and is on the Board of Directors for Leadership Long Beach.

EDUCATION

Ms. McIntosh received her law degree from the University of California, Davis, Martin Luther King Jr. School of Law and received her Bachelor of Science degree in Marine Biology, with a minor in Geology, from the University of Maryland, College Park.

Gabriel McWhirter

Partner, Jarvis Fay LLP

Gabriel represents cities and other public agencies in litigation involving local revenue measures. Over the past 12 years, he has assisted cities with the prosecution of complex tax enforcement actions against large corporations and defended cities and other public agencies in a wide variety of administrative proceedings and court cases challenging the application or validity of utility user taxes, business license taxes, parking taxes, sales and use taxes, utility rates, development fees, and other fees and charges (including cases brought under Propositions 218 and 26).

Gabriel received his J.D. from UC Law San Francisco (formerly Hastings College of the Law). Prior to joining Jarvis Fay, he worked as a law clerk in the Complex Litigation Department of the San Francisco Superior Court. He serves as a member of Cal Cities' Municipal Finance Committee and is a regular contributor to the Finance and Economic Development chapter of the Municipal Law Handbook and Cal Cities' Proposition 26 and 218 Implementation Guide."

Rebecca Moon

City Attorney Sunnyvale

Rebecca Moon was appointed City Attorney of Sunnyvale in May 2024, after previously serving Sunnyvale for 23 years as an Assistant and Senior Assistant City Attorney.

Previously, after graduating from U.C. Law San Francisco (Hastings) in 1993, she worked for seven years as a civil litigator for an insurance defense law firm in San Jose.

Rebecca is currently a member of the Cal Cities FPPC Committee and served as chair of the Committee for two years. She has presented several times at Cal Cities and other conferences on topics such as FPPC regulations, the Levine Act, and the Public Records Act. Her other focus areas include planning and land use, risk management, and liability and litigation. Rebecca was born and raised in Livermore, California, and has an undergraduate degree in English from U.C. Davis.

Lynn Tracy Nerland

City Attorney, Retired

Lynn Tracy Nerland served as City Attorney for the City of San Pablo (2015-2022) and City of Antioch (2006-2015). Before that, she was the Assistant City Attorney for the cities of Pleasanton and Emeryville. Lynn started her legal career with the law firm of Hanson Bridgett representing public agencies. She graduated from UC Law San Francisco (Hastings) as a Tony Patino Fellow and Dartmouth College as a history major. A native of Upstate New York, Lynn first came to California with the Jesuit Volunteer Corps working for a job training and community services organization in Visalia.

Lynn had the honor of serving as the President for the City Attorneys Department of the League of California Cities (2020-2021) and chaired both the Nominating Committee and the Attorney Development and Succession Committee (ADSC). She also served on the Department's FPPC Committee, Municipal Law Institute Committee, and Ad-hoc Public Law Specialization Certification Committee, as well as President of the Contra Costa County City Attorneys Association. A long time ago, she was a reviewer for the Municipal Law Handbook.

Neil Okazaki

Senior Deputy City Attorney/Constitutional Policing Advisor, Corona

Neil Okazaki serves as the Senior Deputy City Attorney and Constitutional Policing Advisor for the City of Corona, where he plays a pivotal role in ensuring law enforcement practices adhere to current legal standards while anticipating future ones and emerging technologies. In addition to advising the Police Department, Neil provides legal counsel to the City's Fire and Human Resources Departments, addressing intricate matters concerning employment law, labor law, and the Firefighters Bill of Rights.

With experience in trial and appellate proceedings, Neil has represented clients in various areas, including civil rights, employment law, disability law, and personal injury. Throughout his career, he has been counsel in 18 jury trials and completed 12 binding arbitrations.

Neil holds an undergraduate degree from UC Riverside and a law degree from Loyola Law School, where he served as Note and Comment Editor of the Loyola Law Review. Beyond his professional endeavors, he has served as president of the Riverside County Bar Association, contributed as a wish granter for Make-A-Wish Orange County & the Inland Empire, and was a member of the UC Riverside Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Asian American Affairs.

Fun Facts: Neil is a magician member at the Academy of Magical Arts at the world-famous Magic Castle and a former Disneyland Jungle Cruise skipper.

Joseph Petta

Partner, Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger LLP

Joseph (Seph) D. Petta is a partner at Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger LLP, a public interest law firm serving public agency, nonprofit, and community group clients. Seph's practice focuses on municipal law. He regularly advises public agencies on a wide array of legal matters including open meeting laws, conflicts of interest, public records, due process, and special district rules. He also helps clients navigate increasingly complex state laws relating to planning, zoning, housing, and the environment. Seph currently serves General Counsel to the Mendocino City Community Services District, General Counsel to the Ladera Recreation District, and Assistant City Attorney to the City of Marina.

Scott Rennie

City Attorney, Belmont

Scott has served as the City of Belmont's in-house city attorney since 2011. Scott came to Belmont after serving 10 years with the City of Fremont as a Senior Deputy City Attorney and four years as a Deputy City Attorney for the City and County of San Francisco. Scott has advised on all manner of municipal issues and has extensive affirmative and defense litigation experience.

Scott has dedicated his life to public service. In addition to his 27 years of local government legal experience, he has served as Planning Commissioner in his home community of San Leandro and as a temporary Judge for the Alameda County Superior Court. He is a volunteer for the League of California Cities, currently serving as the chair of the Legal Advocacy Committee and previously served as a member of the City Attorneys Department Brown Act Committee, and as a contributor to the League's Municipal Law Handbook. He has also assisted the League in legislative lobbying and has testified on behalf of the League before the California State Assembly Transportation Committee. During law school he clerked for the California Attorney General's Office and before that he worked as a civilian military construction planner for the U.S. Navy.

Scott received his law degree with honors from McGeorge School of Law and received his undergraduate degree with honors from Princeton University's School of Architecture. Besides cooking and breadmaking, he enjoys hiking, fishing, camping, and any other excuse that lets him hang out in the great outdoors.

Sean Richmond

Senior Deputy City Attorney, Sacramento

Since 2013, Mr. Richmond has defended the Sacramento Police Department and its personnel in cases arising under 42 U.S.C. section 1983. Practicing primarily in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of California, he has tried multiple cases to verdict and has argued appeals before the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. He has given numerous presentations to national audiences on topics such as Qualified Immunity, Monell Liability, and the preparation of discovery plans for 1983 cases.

James Ross

Of Counsel, Renne Public Law Group

Jim Ross has been providing high-quality legal advice to public entities for over 30 years. Jim is a practical and effective lawyer with extensive experience in public agency law. He has served in county counsel offices for over 26 years. Most recently, he served as Interim County Counsel for Mendocino County while they recruited for and selected a new County Counsel. In 2023, Jim was recognized for his outstanding service by the County Counsel Association of California. During his career, Jim served as County Counsel, Assistant County Counsel, and Deputy County Counsel. Prior to years of working with counties, Jim served as a City Attorney and a Deputy City Attorney as well as providing legal advice to special districts. During his career, Jim has advised governing bodies and departments on the full range of legal issues faced by local government agencies.

Jim Ross's practice focuses on advising public agencies in multiple areas of public law including general government agency advice, affirmative litigation, land use, public works, elections, and litigation oversight and management. He also has experience advising law enforcement agencies including correctional facilities.

PUBLISHED CASES

- *Estill v. County of Shasta* (2018) 25 Cal.App.5th 702
- *Conservatorship of Lee C.* (2017) 18 Cal.App.5th 1072
- *Locklin v. City of Lafayette* (1994) 7 Cal.4th 327 (amici curiae)

Andrew Shen

Partner Renne Public Law Group

Andrew Shen joined RPLG as Senior Counsel in September 2022, after 15 years of experience in the San Francisco City Attorney's Office. At the City Attorney's Office, he provided a wide range of general government advice, with special expertise in ethics and elections. When he departed the City Attorney's Office, Andrew served as the Team Leader for the City Attorney's Office's Ethics and Elections Team.

Andrew's practice includes general government advice, ethics and conflicts of interest, election law, public meeting and records compliance and constitutional law. He also served as a member of the City Attorney's Office's Land Use Team, with a background in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the Subdivision Map Act. In the land use arena, Andrew worked with the San Francisco Planning Department and the Department of Public Works on project approvals and public infrastructure.

Andrew also provides expertise on legal ethics and served as a member of the California State Bar's Committee on Professional Responsibility and Conduct in 2011-13.

At the City Attorney's Office, Andrew routinely advised the Mayor's Office, Board of Supervisors, commissioners, department heads and other City staff on legislation, conflicts of interest, election law and ethics compliance. He staffed public meetings of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, Board of Supervisors committees and city commissions, working closely with clerks and commission secretaries. During his time in the City Attorney's Office, Andrew's primary clients included the Ethics Commission, Department of Elections, Elections Commission, Ballot Simplification Committee and Redistricting Task Force.

Andrew also served on the City Attorney's Office's Racial Equity Task Force from 2020 to 2022.

Before joining the City Attorney's Office, Andrew was a litigation associate at Keker & Van Nest LLP and a law clerk to the Hon. William J. Rea, Senior District Court Judge for the Central District of California.

Kevin Siegel

Partner, Burke, Williams & Sorensen, LLP

Kevin represents cities in a wide range of public law litigation matters, including land use and planning, inverse condemnation, CEQA, Public Records Act, Brown Act, taxes and fees, elections and initiatives, contracts, and due process, equal protection and other constitutional law issues. Kevin specializes in writs and appeals and has had great success in both trial and appellate courts. Kevin also provides special counsel advisory services on these and other public law matters.

Kevin joined Burke, Williams & Sorensen in August 2012. Prior to joining Burke, Kevin was a Deputy City Attorney for the City of Oakland, where he specialized in writs and appeals. Previously, Kevin was a shareholder at McDonough Holland & Allen, where he litigated cases for public agencies across the State, and a Legal Research Attorney for the San Francisco Superior Court, where he advised judges regarding complex litigation.

Kevin endeavors to reach positive outcomes for his clients, without unnecessary litigation. But when necessary, Kevin zealously pursues successful outcomes in both state and federal court.

Matthew Slentz

Senior Counsel, Colantuono, Highsmith & Whatley, PC

Matthew is Senior Counsel with Colantuono, Highsmith & Whatley's litigation practice group and resident in our Orange County office. Matthew litigates a range of disputes for our public agency clients in both trial and appellate courts, including suits involving inverse condemnation, utility user taxes, Public Records Act disputes, post-redevelopment disputes, rates and fees, government contracts, land use and cannabis regulation.

Matthew is admitted to the State Bar of California, the U.S. District Courts for the Central and Eastern Districts of California, and the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeal. He has represented clients at the trial court and appellate level in both state and federal court. His published appellate decisions include *Essick v. County of Sonoma* (2022) 81 Cal.App.5th 941, *Alliance San Diego v. City of San Diego* (2023) 94 Cal.App.5th 419, and representing amici curiae local governments in *Legislature of State of California v. Weber* (2024) 16 Cal.5th 237.

Before joining CHW, Matthew served as Chief Deputy Public Defender for Stanislaus County. In this role, Matthew managed a team of attorneys defending misdemeanor cases, including violations of local ordinances, coordinated with city and county officials on nuisance abatement strategies, and helped formulate his agency's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a deputy public defender, Matthew conducted 25 jury trials to verdict in felony and misdemeanor cases.

Matthew graduated *magna cum laude* from Georgetown University Law Center, where he received the Alan Goldstein Award for excellence in criminal defense. While in law school, Matthew worked as a legal assistant for the Department of the Treasury's Office of Inspector General. He also served as the Executive Senior Editor for the Georgetown Journal of International Law and on the board of the Equal Justice Foundation.

Greg Stepanicich

City Attorney, Retired

Greg Stepanicich practiced public law with the law firm of Richards Watson Gershon for 45 years until his retirement. Greg served as the City Attorney of Agoura Hills, Beverly Hills and Seal Beach in Southern California and after opening the San Francisco office for RWG in 1997, he served as the City Attorney for Fairfield, Mill Valley and Ross. Greg also served as General Counsel to many Joint Powers Authorities and was involved in the formation of several clean energy authorities, serving as General Counsel to Marin Clean Energy, Silicon Valley Clean Energy, and the Clean Energy Alliance. Greg currently serves as Chair of the Marin Planning Commission and is an Adjunct Professor in the School of Public Affairs and Civic Engagement at San Francisco State University, teaching a graduate level class on federalism and intergovernmental relationships.

Elizabeth Tom Arce

Partner, Liebert Cassidy Whitmore

Liz is a skilled advocate with extensive experience litigating labor and employment cases in state and federal courts. She has successfully represented employers in matters ranging from single-plaintiff lawsuits to wage and hour class and collective actions. Her litigation background includes securing favorable summary judgments, defeating class certifications, and decertifying collective actions. Liz also handles arbitration and administrative agency matters, consistently achieving positive results for clients.

Beyond litigation, Liz advises employers on a wide range of employment issues, including wage and hour compliance, disability accommodations, public safety, employee discipline, and anti-discrimination laws. She specializes in auditing employer policies for compliance with the Fair Labor Standards Act.

A dynamic trainer, Liz leverages her litigation experience to educate employers on risk prevention. She frequently presents at firm consortiums and national conferences, helping employers mitigate liability and avoid costly litigation through proactive compliance strategies.

Andrea Velasquez

Supervising Deputy City Attorney, Sacramento

Ms. Velasquez is the supervisor of the Litigation Division and is the lead advisory attorney for the Risk Department. She also provides litigation support primarily on matters in which writ relief is sought under the Public Records Act.

BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE

Ms. Velasquez has served the Sacramento City Attorney's Office since 2014.

Ms. Velasquez spent the first eight years of her legal career working in private sector litigation firms, practicing in various areas, including general tort, construction defect, and professional liability.

Prior to her promotion to Supervising Deputy City Attorney, she was assigned to the Litigation Division. During that time, Ms. Velasquez worked on litigation matters, including civil rights, general tort, dangerous condition of public property, and Public Records Act.

In August 2021, Ms. Velasquez was promoted to Supervising Deputy City Attorney.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Ms. Velasquez is admitted to practice in the United States Court of Appeals, Third and Ninth Districts; as well as the Central, Eastern, and Northern Districts of California; and all California state courts. Ms. Velasquez is a board member of Women Lawyers of Sacramento.

EDUCATION

Ms. Velasquez graduated from UC Davis in 2001 with a bachelor's degree in English. She earned her law degree from the University of Pacific, McGeorge School of Law in 2006.

Meghan Wharton

Senior Counsel, Colantuono, Highsmith & Whatley, PC

Meghan is Senior Counsel in Colantuono, Highsmith & Whatley's litigation practice group. Meghan has been a litigator since 2001 and has focused on public law since 2013. While at Colantuono, Highsmith & Whatley, Meghan has represented numerous public entities, including Alpine County, the cities of Grass Valley, Monterey, Barstow, Redlands, Canyon Lake, and numerous special districts.

Meghan has broad experience representing public entities in non-tort litigation matters. Meghan has litigated cases involving tax allocation, Proposition 218 and 26, election law, municipal finance, contract disputes, the Brown Act, public entity insurance coverage, conflicts of interest, land use, and constitutional challenges to public policies. She has secured victories at trial, on appeal, and before administrative tribunals. She has successfully argued before the California Supreme Court, California Court of Appeal and the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeal. In addition, she drafted the amicus brief for the League of Cities in *Jacks v. Santa Barbara*.

Prior to joining Colantuono, Highsmith & Whatley, Meghan spent ten years with the San Diego City Attorney's Office representing the city in a wide variety of non-tort civil litigation matters and advising the City Council on municipal finance and public policy issues. Meghan was primary counsel to the Public Utilities Department and Mayor's Office regarding Proposition 218 and Proposition 26 issues. Additionally, she co-chaired the office's writing committee and frequently conducted trainings on legal writing topics.

She received her B.A. from the University of Texas at Austin, and her J.D. from Georgetown University Law Center.

PUBLISHED CASES

- *San Diegans for Open Gov't v. Pub. Facilities Financing Auth. of the City of San Diego* (2019) 8 Cal.5th 733 (limiting standing to bring a conflict of interest claim under Gov. Code § 1092).
- *Verdun v. City of San Diego*, 51 F.4th 1033 (9th Cir. 2022) (tire chalking not a constitutional violation).
- *City of Gridley v. Superior Court* (2024) 104 Cal.App.5th 1201 (writ directing Superior Court to grant summary judgment in favor of City allowing electric rates general fund transfer).
- *Mahon v. City of San Diego* (2020) 57 Cal.App.5th 681 (franchise fee not an illegal tax if there is evidence of good faith negotiations resulting in a fee that is reasonably related to the value of the franchise).
- *Sviridov v. City of San Diego* (2017) 14 Cal.App.5th 514 (affirming cost award after plaintiff's failure to do better than § 998 offer).
- *San Diegans for Open Gov't v. City of San Diego* (2015) 242 Cal.App.4th 416 (upholding revenue financing lease to fund infrastructure).

Curtis Wright

Managing Partner, Serviam by Wright LLP

Curtis Wright is a municipal litigator, a city prosecutor, a city attorney, special counsel to cities and counties throughout California, a court receiver, a certified code enforcement officer, and the founding and managing partner of Serviam by Wright LLP. Mr. Wright specializes in assisting cities and counties with municipal litigation, nuisance abatement, code enforcement, receiverships, cost recovery, and numerous other tangential areas of law. He has successfully represented municipal agencies throughout the State in Civil, criminal, and administrative, litigation, rehabilitated numerous extremely dangerous properties that threaten and have taken the lives of the public, and has secured hundreds of receivership appointments and convictions for substandard and blighted nuisance properties. In addition, he has also pioneered new and efficient methods of improving nuisance abatement effectiveness and maximizing municipal cost recovery.

Mr. Wright has been published multiple times on various legal topics and has taught hundreds of classes and led numerous presentations on various aspects of municipal law, receiverships, cannabis regulation, nuisance abatement, code enforcement, and cost recovery. Mr. Wright earned his Juris Doctorate magna cum laude from the University of La Verne College of Law, and his undergraduate degree from the University of Southern California. Prior to his legal career, Curtis was a Captain, Ranger, and combat veteran in the United States Army where he was deployed to Iraq as a platoon leader in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Mr. Wright is second generation law enforcement and hails from a long line of public servants. Curtis is proud to continue the tradition of serving local government to protect the public and improve our communities. Curtis also has two young boys, and is a proud Head Coach of their champion football team!