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## **Speakers' Biographies**



### **Jena S. Acos**

Jena Acos' practice thrives at the intersection of water and public agency law. She intimately understands how natural resource issues interrelate with the economic, social and regulatory aspects inherent in work on behalf of, and for those interfacing with, public agencies. She strategically breaks down problems and generates candid dialogue that is often key to resolving complex issues.

Jena's clients include some of California's largest water districts and private agricultural interests operating in the state's most critically overdrafted basins. Along with institutional government entities, Jena works with various water rights holders on both small-scale and larger projects. She advises clients on the development and implementation of groundwater management plans and brings unique insight on public finance issues involving taxes, assessments, fees and charges.

Jena also serves as a contract city attorney for the City of Carpinteria, where she works with city staff to navigate critical jurisdictional issues and draft, review and enforce contracts and ordinances. Her decade of experience representing the city underscores her expertise in all aspects of local governmental law, including the Brown Act, Public Records Act, Political Reform Act and LAFCO issues, as well as planning, zoning, housing and environmental laws. This has included addressing short-term rentals and housing scarcity, social justice issues, and sea-level rise and coastal access, as well as negotiating land use matters with housing and hotel developers and energy companies."



## **Elizabeth 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, public safety, employee discipline, 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.



## **Mark J. Austin**

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.

Mark began his career representing public entities on both litigation and transactional matters, including real-estate transactions and disputes, constitutional claims, complex land-use matters, employment disputes, and tort claims. Since that time, Mark has expanded his practice to include commercial disputes on behalf of businesses and developers of all sizes, private real-estate litigation, and environmental litigation. In his several years of practice, Mark's clients have included residential and commercial developers, nationally recognized private companies, cities, counties, small businesses, and private homeowners. His focus on real estate litigation has given him substantial insights into drafting pitfalls, disclosure requirements, and judicial interpretations of written agreements.

Mr. Austin has acted as deputy city attorney for several cities, and in 2015 he acted as the Interim City Attorney for the City of Calexico. He has represented the City of Anaheim, the City of Irvine, the City of Dana Point, the City of Torrance, and the City of Vernon, among several others, on multiple high-profile matters and cases.

### Published Cases

- *Lathus v. City of Huntington Beach* (9th Cir. 2023) 56 F.4th 1238 (First Amendment challenge to decision of city councilmember to remove appointed member of public advisory board based on speech).
- *Oxford Preparatory Academy v. Edlighten Learning Solutions* (2019) 34 Cal.App.5th 605 (enforceability of contractual arbitration agreement)



- *City of Cerritos v. Cerritos Taxpayers Assoc., et al.* (2010) 183 Cal.App.4th 1417 (complex validation action concerning purchase and development of senior-housing project)
- *In re County of Monterey Initiative Matter* (N.D. Cal. 2006) 427 Fed.Supp.2d 958 (voting rights case)
- *City of Long Beach v. Department of Industrial Relations* (2004) 34 Cal.4th 942 (amicus; prevailing wage issue)



## **Vanessa Bechtel**

Vanessa Bechtel, AIFA, CSPG, serves as President and CEO of the Ventura County Community Foundation (VCCF). Over the last five years, because of the support of thousands of generous donors, the foundation has been able to grant over \$111 million in service to our community, advancing a wide range of causes, including access to education, health care, housing, the environment, animal welfare, arts and music, disaster relief and response, and so much more!

Prior to her work with VCCF, Bechtel served as executive director of the Santa Barbara City College Foundation. She co-founded Monarch Wealth Strategies in 2008 and was honored as Businesswoman of the Year by the Santa Barbara Chamber of Commerce in 2010. Bechtel was recognized as Nonprofit Leader of the Year by the Ventura County Leadership Academy in 2019 and Humanitarian of the Year by the Teddy Bear Cancer Foundation with her spouse, Jim. In December 2020, Bechtel was named Woman of the Year for 2020 by both the Camarillo Chamber of Commerce and the 19th Senatorial District and 37th Assembly District.

Bechtel graduated from UC Santa Barbara with a degree in Law and Society. In 2016, she received her master's degree from the Marshall School of Business at the University of Southern California. She also received her master's certificate from the International Institute for the Sociology of Law in Onati, Spain in 2002.

In her spare time, Bechtel enjoys hiking, practicing the piano and violin, and is an avid reader.



### **Karl H. Berger**

Karl Berger's nearly 30 years of practicing law are exclusively devoted to representing public agencies. He is the City Attorney for the City of Bellflower; the City Attorney for the City of Monterey Park; and General Counsel for the Carpinteria Sanitary District. Additionally, Karl is the Senior Assistant City Attorney for Simi Valley; Assistant City Attorney for the City of Santa Clarita; and provides regular legal services for the cities of Brentwood and Carmel-by-the-Sea. Karl previously served as the City Attorney for Santa Paula; Interim City Attorney for Atascadero; Acting City Attorney for the City of Port Hueneme; Deputy City Attorney for the City of Port Hueneme; Assistant City Attorney for the cities of El Segundo and Camarillo; Assistant City Attorney for the City of San Buenaventura; and research attorney for the City of El Cajon. He previously served as General Counsel for the Montecito Sanitary District and Lamont Public Utility District.

In addition to these appointed public official positions, Karl provides special counsel services to dozens of public agencies. Karl is knowledgeable in a wide range of public law areas, including conflicts of interest, open meeting laws, public works contracts, redevelopment and successor agencies, personnel matters, all aspects of land use and planning laws, and CEQA.

Karl currently serves as a member of the Legal Advocacy Executive Committee. He previously served on the Housing, Community & Economic Development Policy Committee with the League of California Cities. Karl is also a contributing author for the Municipal Law Handbook (League of California Cities) and author for the Charter City Project (Institute for Local Government).



**Kevin Bibler**

Kevin Bibler is a Senior Vice President with Alliant Insurance Services. Working exclusively with Public Entity clients, he has been with Alliant for over 20 years and in the industry for over 30 years. As a licensed property and casualty broker, Kevin specializes in developing insurance and risk management solutions for his individual and pool clients. He considers himself very fortunate to work with some of the largest (and smallest) public entities in California.



**Christina Burrows**

Christina Burrows serves as the Assistant City Attorney to the City of Culver City. Christina provides legal and practical advice to City officials and staff on a broad range of issues such as open meeting laws, land use, conflicts of interest, public records, and elections. Prior to joining Culver City, Christina spent ten years working at private firms representing cities and other public entities in litigation and advisory matters. Christina obtained her J.D. from UCLA Law School and a B.A. from UC San Diego. Christina is active in professional and community organizations, serving on the League of California Cities' Attorney Development and Succession Committee and as Treasurer to the City Attorneys' Association of Los Angeles County.



### **Michael G. Colantuono**

Michael G. Colantuono is managing shareholder of Colantuono, Highsmith & Whatley, a municipal law firm with offices around California. 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 11 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.



### **Christine Leigh Crowl**

Christie's practice focuses on California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance, land use, planning and zoning law, and general municipal law. She assists cities and other public agency clients in navigating the entitlement process, and has extensive experience with permitting, environmental review, development agreements, zoning ordinance compliance, General and Specific Plan compliance, conditional use permits, the Subdivision Map Act, the Brown Act, and the Political Reform Act. She specializes in drafting, reviewing, and "bulletproofing" CEQA documents. Christie has advised municipal clients on a variety of topical and environmentally sensitive issues, including amendments to ordinances governing accessory dwelling units, signs, special events, and cannabis. Designated a California Super Lawyers Rising Star for the last 8 years, Christie has previously presented to City Attorney organizations on the comprehensive update to the CEQA Guidelines as well as to this group on drafting and processing public contracts and Requests for Proposal.



**Rubin E. Cruse, Jr.**

Rubin E. Cruse, Jr. is a practical and detail-oriented attorney with extensive experience in public agency law having served in the Shasta County Counsel's Office for over twenty-four years and as the Shasta County Counsel for over twelve years. He effectively managed the County's in-house law office while also providing practical legal advice and representation to the Board of Supervisors, the County Executive Officer, and other County leadership on the full panoply of legal issues impacting California county government.

Rubin has also served as Vice President and President of the County Counsel's Association of California. The County Counsel's Association presented him with the James B. Lindholm, Jr. Legacy Award for his outstanding contributions to the organization and public agency law.

RELATED EXPERIENCE

As County Counsel for the County of Shasta, Ruben was responsible for:

Providing legal advice and representation to over twenty County departments, including the County Clerk/Registrar of Voters, the Planning Director, and the Sheriff.

Managing an active law office, supervising a team of attorneys and support staff.

Training and advising public officials and employees on various legal topics, including the Brown Act, ethics and conflicts of interest, election campaign restrictions, local campaign finance ordinances, and the laws against harassment and discrimination.

Drafting ballot titles and summaries, as well as impartial analyses for local measures submitted to the electorate, including tax measures.

Representing County agencies in arbitration and administrative proceedings involving labor and employment issues



## **Catherine Engberg**

Catherine Engberg joined Shute, Mihaly, & Weinberger in 2002 after completing a clerkship with the Honorable Barry Ted Moskowitz, United States District Court Judge for the Southern District of California. Ms. Engberg is a partner at the firm. Her practice includes municipal law, CEQA compliance and litigation, local initiatives and referendums, eminent domain, real estate transactions, and general plan and zoning law.

Ms. Engberg serves as City Attorney to the City of Half Moon Bay, and Town Attorney to the Town of Portola Valley. She regularly advises clients regarding open meeting laws, conflicts of interest, and public records. She advised the City of Half Moon Bay in connection with its 2020 Local Coastal Land Use Plan Update, which was certified by the California Coastal Commission in April 2021.

Ms. Engberg has litigation experience in both state and federal court regarding constitutional, CEQA and election law matters. She maintains an active practice before the California Public Utilities Commission, representing environmental organizations on a wide array of ratesetting and permitting proceedings. She has advised several public agencies in connection with updates to their general plans, housing elements and related CEQA documentation. Ms. Engberg routinely represents community groups in administrative proceedings and CEQA litigation over major infrastructure and residential projects.

Ms. Engberg is a member of the firm's initiative and referendum committee. She has drafted numerous ballot measures on behalf of community groups, including two countywide initiatives to ban fracking. Ms. Engberg recently authored an amicus brief on behalf of the Colorado PTA in the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals in the case *Kerr v. Hickenlooper*, in support of plaintiffs' challenge the voter-enacted Colorado Taxpayers Bill of Rights.

Ms. Engberg represents the Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency with respect to right of way acquisition related to the Natomas Levee Improvement Program. She has extensive trial and appellate litigation experience in right of way and eminent domain matters.

Ms. Engberg teaches land use law at Stanford Law School and Berkeley Law. She has published in the *Stanford Law Review* and the *Stanford Environmental Law Journal* on topics of ranging from citizen initiatives to legal issues regarding the decommissioning of dams. She has led CEQA, open government, and



election law workshops sponsored by the Planning and Conservation League, Sierra Club and Friends of Harbors Beaches and Parks.

Ms. Engberg routinely presents on land use and housing issues. In 2021, Ms. Engberg presented at the League of California Cities City Attorney's Spring Conference on the topic of government speech. In 2017, Ms. Engberg presented on the topic of developer sponsored initiatives at the League of California Cities City Attorney's Spring Conference. In 2016, Ms. Engberg presented to the Livable Communities Advisory Team, AARP, on the topic of "CEQA Pros and Cons" and engaged in a discussion of challenges that restrict affordable housing production. In 2014, Ms. Engberg spoke at the Southern California County Counsels' Association Meeting on a panel entitled "Fracking: Discussion of Legal Issues Facing Local Governments."

Ms. Engberg has been named as a Northern California Super Lawyer (Land Use and Zoning) each year since 2019.

Ms. Engberg received her law degree, with distinction, from Stanford Law School in 2001 and her undergraduate degree from Stanford University in 1995. Prior to attending law school, she worked as an environmental engineer and is a licensed Professional Civil Engineer.

In her spare time, Ms. Engberg has served on the Kensington Municipal Advisory Council, which provides recommendations on planning, design review and land use issues in her local community. She currently serves as Treasurer of Bay Nature Institute where she has been board member since 2018.

Ms. Engberg is a member of the Bar of the State of California.



## **Kevin G. Ennis**

Kevin is a trusted and reliable advisor with over 35 years of experience in counseling governmental entities on the full spectrum of issues faced by California's public agencies and helping them get projects accomplished. He represents public and private entities throughout the state on matters of general municipal law, conflicts of interest and ethics, land use and planning, and various special projects. Drawing from a diverse professional background of experience, including varied settings and jurisdictions, Kevin provides advice that reflects careful consideration of the unique needs and constraints of each client to find lawful and defensible pathways to accomplish the client's goals.

### WORK FOR CLIENTS

Kevin serves as City Attorney for the City of Moorpark and as General Counsel for the Palos Verdes Library District. He served as City Attorney for the City of Artesia for 19 years, City Attorney for the City of Calimesa for 12 years, City Attorney for the City of Banning for 5 years and as City Attorney for the City of Laguna Niguel for over 3 years. Additionally, he has served as Assistant City Attorney or Deputy City Attorney for the Cities of Beverly Hills, Palmdale, Rancho Cucamonga, and Rolling Hills. He serves as special land use, municipal law, and conflict of interest counsel to several other cities, districts, and public agencies.

### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Kevin joined Richards, Watson & Gershon in 1986. He developed into a widely regarded expert in the Subdivision Map Act, the Political Reform Act, and in local traffic control laws. He also is well-versed in issues pertaining to zoning requirements, general and specific plans, discretionary permits and entitlements, and land use approvals and regulations, including California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance. Kevin also provides strategic advice on, and negotiates, structures, and documents complex land use transactions.

Kevin was a co-instructor at UCLA Extension's Public Policy Program and taught Advanced Issues Involving the Subdivision Map Act from 2000 - 2015.

### PROFESSIONAL AND COMMUNITY AFFILIATIONS

Past Chair, League of California Cities Legal Advocacy Committee



Past President, Los Angeles County Bar Association State and Local Government Law Section

Past President, Claremont McKenna College Alumni Association

Former Alumnus Trustee, Claremont McKenna College

Former Member, League of California Cities Housing, Community, and Economic Development Policy Committee

Former Member, League of California Cities Municipal Law Handbook Committee

City Attorney's Association of Los Angeles County

American Bar Association

Los Angeles County Bar Association

## EXPERIENCE

Cities and public agencies routinely seek Kevin's expertise in navigating the legal and political challenges that arise during the complex planning and entitlement process for large-scale commercial, industrial, and residential development projects.

► **Bob Hope Airport Terminal Security Enhancement Project.** The Bob Hope Airport Terminal Security Enhancement Project renovated and expanded Terminal A of the passenger terminal building to achieve security screening enhancements and additional fire/emergency access. Kevin advised the Burbank-Glendale-Pasadena Airport Authority on entitlements for the project.

► **Bob Hope Airport Property Acquisition Project.** The Bob Hope Airport Property Acquisition Project enabled the Burbank-Glendale-Pasadena Airport Authority to provide space for the relocation of airport parking lots, and expansion of aircraft taxiway. Kevin structured and drafted a complex development agreement that enabled the airport authority to obtain necessary land from the City of Burbank for the project and to construct other airport improvements.

► **Bob Hope Airport Replacement Terminal Project.** The Bob Hope Airport Replacement Passenger Terminal Project is a multi-component development that includes multiple parking structures, a terminal access road, an aircraft





rescue and firefighting station, a central utility plant, and a replacement airline cargo building. Kevin was a principal negotiator for the Burbank-Glendale-Pasadena Airport Authority in its efforts to secure entitlements from the City of Burbank for the project. He also advised the airport authority on strategic planning, public outreach, CEQA, and land use issues associated with the project, and he continues to provide counsel in connection new phases of the project.

► Los Angeles Air Force Base Campus Project. Kevin represented the City of Hawthorne in connection with a 39-acre annexation from the City of El Segundo and preparation of specific plans for a complex land use project that facilitated funding for the retention of the Los Angeles Air Force Base. The project resulted in developer funding for the design and construction of a new, consolidated campus for the base.

► Fort Ord Redevelopment Project. The former Fort Ord army base is being redeveloped with two multi-phase mixed-used projects, the Seaside Resort Development and the Projects at Main Gate. The 380-acre Resort development will be the largest proposed commercial and residential project in Monterey County and will feature a four-star 330-room hotel and additional residential units. The 56-acre Main Gate development includes plans for a 500,000 sq. ft. open-air, retail, and entertainment space and a 250-room hotel conference center and spa component. Kevin represented the City of Seaside in connection with CEQA compliance, specific plan and subdivision law, and general plan and zoning amendments for the projects.

► Rancho Cucamonga Victoria Gardens Shopping Center. Kevin represented the City of Rancho Cucamonga in connection with the review of project entitlements and modifications to the residential components of the Victoria Gardens Shopping Center — a 1.3 million sq. ft. open-air mixed-use town center situated on 147 acres and spanning 30 city blocks. He advised the city on CEQA compliance, specific plan and subdivision law, and general plan and zoning law requirements.



## **Jonathan Holtzman**

Jonathan V. Holtzman is a founding partner of Renne Public Law Group. Mr. Holtzman's practice focuses on assisting government agencies maintain and expand public services through strategic consulting, negotiations, fact finding, arbitration and litigation. He specializes in addressing long-term structural issues relating to pensions, health benefits, retirement health benefits, civil service reform, and other means of attaining greater managerial discretion and effectiveness through collective bargaining and reorganization. Mr. Holtzman also practices government law, including general advice work, drafting ballot and other legislative measures and initiatives, litigating issues of constitutional and statutory interpretation, and electoral matters. He currently serves as District Counsel to the Moraga Orinda Fire District. Mr. Holtzman has experience in virtually all aspects of employment law and labor relations. His labor expertise encompasses negotiations, fact finding, mediation, grievance and interest arbitration, and litigation related to bargaining obligations. He is the author of Rutter Group's California Practice Guide: Public Sector Employment Litigation Guide, the leading treatise on public sector employment issues. Mr. Holtzman is a graduate of Stanford Law School and clerked for Justice Otto Kaus of the California Supreme Court.



**Andrew Jared**

Mr. Jared is the City Attorney for the Cities of Yreka, Montague and Etna, and General Counsel for the Goleta Water District. He is Senior Counsel at Colantuono, Highsmith & Whatley, PC



**Michael Lawson**

Mr. Lawson has served as City Attorney since 2008. Mr. Lawson has a long record of public service, having also served as City Attorney for the cities of Berkeley, Oakland, and East Palo Alto. He is a graduate of the University of California, Davis, King Hall School of Law (J.D.), and the California State University, Hayward/East Bay (B.A., Journalism/Mass Communications).



## **John M. Luebberke**

John M. Luebberke has devoted the majority of his practice to representing cities and other public agencies concerning challenging litigation and transactional matters. Most recently, Mr. Luebberke served as City Attorney for the City of Stockton for twelve years, before retiring in 2022 to return to private practice.

Over nearly thirty years representing public agencies, public employees and elected leaders Mr. Luebberke has cultivated many strong and enduring relationships with clients and has developed a wide range of expertise that includes land use and development law, environmental law, water law and all aspects of the law governing the operation of public agencies and public utilities.

In the course of representing the City of Stockton as its City Attorney, John became a recognized expert in the Brown Act, Public Records Act, the Fair Political Practices Act, local election law, Proposition 218 and public utility rate setting. Mr. Luebberke also has more than twenty years of experience representing cities and (former) Redevelopment Agencies in real estate transactions, as well as Brownfield and environmental restoration and remediation efforts under the Polanco Act and AB 440.

The Great Recession presented John with a unique set of challenges few lawyers have the opportunity to encounter. These challenges included the legal processes of staff reduction (lay-offs), "effects" employee bargaining, employee benefits retraction, municipal bankruptcy and coordinating the City's strategy and efforts of a multiplicity of law firms and fiscal consultants. This experience also involved drafting numerous important city charter amendments and guiding the City of Stockton as it established new tax revenue sources post-bankruptcy through local tax initiatives and a return to capital markets to finance essential new public facilities. Today Stockton is one of the most fiscally sound cities in America.

John has been instrumental in assisting clients through numerous diverse and important policy and legal issues over his nearly 30 years in public practice. Examples include negotiating and implementing the return of City of Stockton's water, sewer and storm drain utilities after a failed privatization agreement with OMI/Thames; representing the City of Stockton in city council redistricting during



both the 2010 and 2020 cycles; drafting various amendments to the City of Stockton Charter that restored compliance with voting rights laws and the drafting and implementation of the first medical cannabis ordinance in San Joaquin County.

On behalf of his public agency and public employee clients Mr. Luebberke has been instrumental in resolving numerous and very serious litigation cases involving a wide range of legal issues. These have included matters in complex eminent domain disputes, civil rights law (ADA, free speech and section 1983), wrongful death, employment, public utility and public finance related matters in both state and federal court.

This perspective and experience can be valuable to private or public entities dealing with these types of sophisticated legal matters involving the delicate intersection of public and private interests.

In addition to many hours spent providing in-person educational content to client city councils, public employees, boards and commissions Mr. Luebberke has also designed training curriculum on land use and development law, Brownfield redevelopment, the Brown Act, Public Records Act and mandatory conflict of interest and ethics training.

In his spare time Mr. Luebberke likes to garden, fish and play golf. As an amateur oenophile, Mr. Luebberke can often be found touring the California wine country and cooking for family and friends.



**Cindie K. McMahon**

Cindie McMahon is the City Attorney for the City of Carlsbad in San Diego County, California. Prior to her appointment to this post, she served the city as an Assistant City Attorney focusing on Legislative Advocacy, Human Resources, Finance, Economic Development, Elections, Water, and Real Estate matters. Her career highlights also include serving 14.5 years as an appellate attorney with the Court of Appeal in San Diego. She is currently a member of the Cal Cities Municipal Law Handbook Committee and has previously been a member of Legal Advocacy Committee.



## **David Mehretu**

David Mehretu is a seasoned litigator and trial attorney with 17 years of experience representing private and public entities in high impact litigation, in federal and state court.

Known for his powerful written and oral advocacy, insightful, creative, and strategic legal thinking, and deft handling of difficult matters, David's practice is marked by complex, high stakes, and politically significant lawsuits often covered by the media.

Clients tout David's ability to quickly understand their operations and objectives; his highly effective communication skills with key stakeholders, including boards and other governing bodies; and his record of success devising and implementing effective and efficient strategies, to achieve his clients' most pressing objectives and goals. He is a consummate advisor, taking pride in customizing services to the unique preferences and needs of his clients, in all areas of case administration, communication, and client engagement.

For private entities, David has broad experience in complex commercial litigation, employment litigation and investigations, class actions, unfair competition, real estate, land use and environmental litigation and regulatory challenges. He has worked with private entities in major sectors of the economy, including energy companies, technology companies, financial institutions, media and telecommunications enterprises, global consumer goods companies, food and beverage companies, real estate developers, and non-profit organizations. For public entities, David handles complex contractual disputes, defense of government officials, employment, land use, First Amendment matters, and real estate litigation.

David received his J.D. from New York University School of Law where he served as an editor for the Review of Law and Social Change. He earned his B.A. in philosophy and politics from New York University. He clerked for the Honorable Sandra B. Armstrong, United States District Judge for the Northern District of California and served as a post-doctoral legal fellow at the Institute for Policy Integrity — a regulatory law and policy think tank based at New York University School of Law. David is Co-Chair of Meyers Nave's Diversity Committee, providing strategic oversight and direction on a plethora of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, including the Diversity Summer Fellowship Program for





rising second year law students. The “Listen Ask Learn” Speaker Series hosts acclaimed attorneys, judges, politicians, and business executives for moderator-led discussions relating to DEI, business development, and legal practice and ethics.



**Steven Miller**

Steven Miller is the independent ethics investigator/evaluator for the City of Sacramento Ethics Commission and the City of San Jose Board of Fair Campaign and Political Practices (formerly Ethics Commission). He is general counsel to two special districts and advises on ethics, governance, contracts and procurement, and regulatory matters throughout the State. He is a partner with the law firm Hanson Bridgett LLP. You can reach Steven at [smiller@hansonbridgett.com](mailto:smiller@hansonbridgett.com).



**Phaedra A. Norton**

Phaedra Norton, City Attorney for the City of Riverside previously City Attorney for the City of Turlock and Merced and the General Counsel to the Central Valley Groundwater Sustainability Agency and the Stanislaus Regional Water Authority with 26 years of municipal law practice 16 years in the role of City Attorney



### **Kathryn Oehlschlager**

With over twenty years of experience in land use and environmental law, Kathryn Oehlschlager has built a robust practice spanning compliance counseling, state and federal enforcement defense, and major litigation.

Public and private clients turn to Kathryn for advice on compliance with all facets of environmental and land use law, including CEQA, NEPA, federal and state endangered species laws, the California Coastal Act, contaminated site remediation, water quality and supply issues, and laws regulating solid and hazardous waste. She routinely represents clients in all aspects of the CEQA project review process, including preparation, review, and analysis of negative declarations, draft environmental impact reports, and final environmental impact reports. Kathryn specializes in large-scale, complex infrastructure projects with multi-level state and federal permitting requirements.

Kathryn also has a proven track record with high-stakes litigation, having handled numerous land use and environmental cases in state and federal trial courts and through the courts of appeal. Kathryn is equally comfortable handling writs of mandamus and traditional civil litigation matters, and regularly represents clients in administrative appeals, including the second appeal ever heard by the Delta Stewardship Council.



### **Neil Okazaki**

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, 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, ADA law, and personal injury. He has successfully conducted 18 jury trials and completed 12 binding arbitrations throughout his legal career.

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 participated as a member of the UC Riverside Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Asian-American Affairs.



### **Valerie Gaeta Phillips**

Ms. Gaeta Phillips has over 20 years of recruiting experience, including more than a decade of recent experience in executive search for public, private, and startup companies nationwide. Since joining Bob Murray & Associates, Valerie has completed 100's of searches in a diverse range of fields, including city and general management, planning, finance, human resources, transportation, communication and public relations, community and economic development, information technology, parks and recreation, high-tech and operations. She has recruited executives for municipal, non-profit, and private organizations, from Directors and Chiefs to Executive Directors and Chief Executive Officers.

Valerie is a Latina business owner who is valued for her passion for finding and retaining the most outstanding candidates for even the most difficult or untraditional assignments, and for her commitment to her clients' success. She is also active in a variety of industry organizations and in diversity-focused associations. Valerie is called upon often to serve as an expert speaker on topics such as managing one's online reputation, diversity issues in municipal and non-profit leadership, and how to identify the best candidate for organizational culture.

Ms. Gaeta Phillips, along with Executive Vice President Gary Phillips, has a passion for helping people, evidenced by fundraising, sponsorship, and involvement in raising awareness for organizations such as Autism Speaks, the UC Davis M.I.N.D. Institute, and the Northern California Special Olympics.



**Michael W. Pott**

Mike Pott is a recovering litigator having spent 17 years defending a variety of public and private entities in litigation in state and federal courts with the Sacramento law firm Porter Scott. He has worked for PRISM for the past 9 years, first as the Chief Claims Officer and currently as the Chief Operating Officer/Chief Legal Counsel providing operational oversight for the organization and legal advice to the CEO and Board of Directors.



## **Margaret Prinzing**

Margaret R. Prinzing is a partner who focuses on litigation involving government law, constitutional law, and public policy issues. Representative matters include defending the California Legislature in litigation challenging the constitutionality of Regional Measure 3, a toll increase on Bay Area bridges (*Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association v. Bay Area Toll Authority*, 51 Cal. App. 5th 435 (2020)); representing a county in a challenge to the constitutionality of the unitary tax rate (*AT&T Mobility LLC, et al. v. County of Riverside*, Riverside County Super. Ct., No. RIC 1905814 (2020)); and defending the City of Mountain View's implementation of a voter-approved rent control measure. (*Bolhouse v. Rental Housing Committee*, No. H046335, 2020 WL 7585884 (Cal. Ct. App. Dec. 22, 2020)).

Ms. Prinzing also specializes in election law. She helped draft Proposition 24 (2020), the California Privacy Rights Act; Proposition 63 (2016), which strengthened California's gun safety laws; Proposition 47 (2014), which requires misdemeanor rather than felony sentences for certain nonviolent offenses; the Richmond Kids First Initiative to fund programs for children and youth (Richmond, 2018); and Measure D, the first voter-approved measure to tax the distribution of sugary beverages (Berkeley, 2014). She advises ballot measure committees and candidates on election procedures, engaging in political communications, and candidates' ballot designations. She also represents her clients in litigation as necessary, including representing supporters of Measure D in San Diego County in two lawsuits that ultimately ensured the measure appeared on the ballot in 2018 (*Vargas v. Vu*, San Diego County Super. Ct., No. 37-2018-00035775; *Greene v. Vu*, San Diego County Super. Ct., No. 37-2018-00037778 (2018)); and winning emergency relief in the California Supreme Court to ensure that Proposition 57 appeared on the 2016 ballot. (*Brown v. Superior Court*, 63 Cal. 4th 335 (2016)).

In addition, Ms. Prinzing has expertise in mental health and education issues. She is currently representing a county in litigation over the hospitalization of patients experiencing mental health emergencies (*Fairchild Medical Center v. Lightbourne*, No. 2:20-CV-00487 (E.D. Cal. removed Mar. 4, 2020)); represented a joint powers authority in the first appeal in California of an audit under the Mental Health Services Act; and has represented the California Department of Education and Board of Education in litigation addressing the State's role in providing students an equal education. (*Cruz v. State of California*, Alameda County Super. Ct., No. RG14727139 (2015)).





Finally, Ms. Prinzing advises interested persons, officeholders, and officials on government law matters including the separation of powers, statutory interpretation, administrative law, and conflicts of interest. She also advises attorneys on professional responsibility matters such as conflicts of interest and fee agreements, and has moved to disqualify a law firm for violating the conflict of interest rules.

In recent years, Ms. Prinzing has provided ethics training to the AC Transit Board of Directors; spoken before the California League of Cities' Spring Conference on "Navigating Pitfalls Under Government Code Section 1090," and made a presentation for the California Lawyers Association on election litigation.

Ms. Prinzing has served on the Board of Directors for Foster Youth Rising and the Advisory Board for the California Habeas Project. She also served as a Court Appointed Special Advocate in Alameda County for over six years.

Prior to joining the firm, Ms. Prinzing was an associate with Bingham McCutchen where she specialized in civil and appellate litigation, with an emphasis on federal preemption and employment law matters. She also worked as a legislative assistant to two members of Congress, focusing on health care, welfare, and education matters.



### **Steven B. Quintanilla**

Steve Q commenced being Rancho Mirage City Attorney since 2002, and he currently serves as Moreno Valley City Attorney. Steve is a UCLA Bruin where he spent nearly 10 years of his life that he would not want live over again. At UCLA, he obtained a BA in Environmental Policy, Masters in Architecture and Urban Planning, and a JD from UCLA School of Law. Although Steve lives in San Diego, he is renovating an old Adobe house near Joshua Tree National Park using his new nail gun and other scary tools. Steve has four dogs (don't ask) and his favorite pastime is walking his herd of dogs (without a tangle of leashes) at Fiesta Island at Mission Bay in San Diego. Finally, Steve is the President/Owner of the Law Offices of Quintanilla & Associates, with 7 attorneys and a stellar paralegal. While his firm maintains an office in Palm Springs, his office has been operating mostly remotely since 2013 (pre Zoom), except for scheduled office hours at the city halls.



### **Javan Rad**

Javan Rad is the Chief Assistant City Attorney for the City of Pasadena, and has been with Pasadena since 2005. Javan oversees nine lawyers in the Civil Division of the City Attorney's office, and also handles a variety of litigation and advisory matters in the areas of constitutional, tort, and telecommunications law. Javan has been active in a variety of capacities for the League of California Cities' City Attorney's Department, and is currently a member of the Brown Act Committee and the Ad Hoc Committee on Enhancing Inclusion and Participation. Javan has previously served as President of the City Attorney's Association of Los Angeles County, and as President of the Board of Directors of SCAN NATOA (the States of California and Nevada Chapter of the National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors). Javan graduated from Purdue University with a bachelor's degree in Quantitative Agricultural Economics and from Pepperdine University School of Law.



### **Sydne Rennie**

A responsive and detailed-oriented attorney, Sydne Rennie helps clients navigate complex real estate and business matters. Her real estate practice centers on leasing, purchase and sale transactions, and property development matters. She also works with clients on their various business needs, including entity formation and drafting and negotiating contracts.

Sydne also has significant experience representing public agency clients in their real estate and business matters. Her public agency work includes assisting clients with real property dispositions subject to the Surplus Land Act, public works projects, procurement matters and general contracting.



**Sujata Reuter**

Su Reuter is the Chief Assistant City Attorney for the City of Santa Clara. Prior to her work at the City of Santa Clara, she was in private practice for many years representing numerous public agencies in a variety of litigation matters before state and federal trial and appeals courts.



**Karen Rogan**

Karen Rogan has been practicing law since 2005. She joined the Chula Vista City Attorney's office as a Deputy City Attorney in December 2011 and is currently the Assistant City Attorney over the litigation unit. Her primary role as Assistant City Attorney is overseeing, representing, and managing civil litigation involving the City of Chula Vista. Her practice encompasses a wide array of state and federal matters, including excessive force/civil rights, personal injury, California Public Records Act, construction defect, employment law, and contractual disputes.

Prior to joining City of Chula Vista, Mrs. Rogan worked for a national law firm in the areas of securities fraud, professional liability, civil rights, and construction defect.



## **Jennifer Rosner**

Jennifer is a prolific litigator with an extensive background in lawsuits involving discrimination, harassment and retaliation, as well as disciplinary and due process issues. As a litigator, Jennifer has considerable experience with law enforcement issues, including the Public Safety Officers Procedural Bill of Rights Act, and in defending law enforcement agencies in officer discipline, Section 1983 claims and Pitchess Motion hearings. She has tried law enforcement lawsuits to verdict and/or judgment in state and federal court in cases involving claims for retaliation for exercising freedom of speech rights and union activities under 42 U.S.C. Section 1983 and false imprisonment. In one of her recent trials, Jennifer obtained a non-suit after nine-day jury trial involving a police officer who alleged numerous tort causes of action. Jennifer has been successful in obtaining summary judgment on behalf of clients in many of her litigation matters in both state and federal court and also has extensive appellate experience.

In addition to her work as a litigator, Jennifer represents clients in numerous administrative appeal hearings and has a strong record of success on behalf of the firm's clients in upholding their disciplinary decisions. Jennifer also frequently responds to requests from clients for advice and guidance in the areas of leave rights, disability interactive process, disability retirement, discipline, termination, Family Medical Leave Act, Fair Labor Standards Act, investigations, retaliation and discrimination. She also works extensively with local agencies on every facet of the disability accommodation process, including identifying disabilities, requesting medical documentation and evaluation, evaluating leave rights of disabled employees, engaging in the interactive process, identifying possible reasonable accommodations, complying with applicable disability laws, and, when necessary, disability retirements. Jennifer is a prolific trainer on numerous employment law issues, including disability and the interactive process, industrial disability retirement, investigations, discipline, managing the marginal employment, the Fair Labor Standards Act, Ethics, harassment, discrimination and retaliation.



**Alana Rotter**

Alana Rotter is a certified appellate specialist adept at handling appeals and writ petitions for public entities. Clients 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. Alana clerked for Judge Kermit Lipez of the United States Court of Appeals for the First Circuit and graduated from Yale Law School. She is a partner at the appellate firm Greines, Martin, Stein & Richland LLP.





### **Scott C. Smith**

Scott Smith has worked at Best Best & Krieger since law school graduation. He serves as City Attorney to the Cities of Aliso Viejo and Laguna Niguel, and works for many other firm clients on issues of state and local regulatory and land use law, including advice on critical issues relating to the First and Fifth Amendments, election law, development and environmental law, and municipal law. Scott is general counsel to the Santa Margarita Water District and Orange County Local Agency Formation Commission. He served previously as city attorney in San Clemente, Lake Forest, Santee, La Verne and Big Bear Lake. Scott's proudest professional accomplishment is seeing the associates he's mentored grow into exceptional city attorneys across California. His greatest professional joy is overseeing the firm's Best Writers Club, where colleagues meet monthly to celebrate good legal writing and to hone their own skills. Scott's family vacationed every summer in San Clemente, then he moved his own family there as soon as he could.



### **Heather Leyn Stroud**

Heather Stroud has been the City Attorney for South Lake Tahoe since October 2018. Prior to that, she was a Deputy City Attorney for San Diego and Carlsbad. In her free time, she enjoys spending time outdoors skiing, hiking, camping, and birdwatching.



## **Meghan A. Wharton**

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.

Meghan has broad public entity litigation experience. While in-house with the San Diego City Attorney's Office, Meghan litigated cases involving Proposition 218 and 26, election law, municipal finance, contract disputes, the Brown Act, insurance coverage, conflicts of interest, COVID-19 vaccination disputes, and employment disputes. Meghan was primary counsel to the Public Utilities Department and Mayor's Office regarding Proposition 218 and Proposition 26 issues.

Meghan has argued before the California Supreme Court, California Court of Appeal, and the 9th Circuit. She is admitted to practice before the 9th Circuit, the District Courts for the Northern, Southern, Eastern, and Central Districts of California and the District of Arizona.

Meghan successfully defended San Diego in the California Supreme Court in *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). Her published California Court of Appeal decisions include *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); and *San Diegans for Open Gov't v. City of San Diego* (2015) 242 Cal.App.4th 416 (upholding revenue financing lease to fund infrastructure). Before the 9th Circuit, Meghan successfully defended the City's practice of chalking tires to enforce parking limits. *Verdun v. City of San Diego*, 51 F.4th 1033 (9th Cir. 2022). Meghan also represented the League of California Cities as amicus in *Jacks v. Santa Barbara*.

Meghan served as the San Diego's Chief Deputy City Attorney for the Special Litigation Division. Additionally, she co-chaired the office's writing committee and frequently conducted trainings on legal writing topics.



Meghan previously served on the San Diego County Bar Association's Legislative Committee (2020-2022). In 2023, Meghan was appointed to the League of California Cities' City Attorneys Department Municipal Finance Committee.

Meghan was admitted to the Arizona Bar (now inactive) in 2001 and the California Bar in 2007. Meghan graduated cum laude from Georgetown University Law Center. Meghan holds a B.A. in History from the University of Texas, Austin.

Meghan and her wife relocated to Nevada City, CA in 2023 and joined our Grass Valley office. In her free time, Meghan enjoys painting and hiking.



## **Marc Zafferano**

Since January 2023, Marc has worked as Senior Counsel with Boucher Law, specializing in general counsel work, employment law, and personnel investigations for municipal and nonprofit clients throughout the state. Prior to joining the firm, Marc served as City Attorney for the cities of San Bruno (2011-2022) and Belmont (2005-2011), and earlier as Deputy City Attorney for the cities of San Carlos, Foster City and Woodside, and District Counsel for the West Bay Sanitary District and San Mateo County Harbor District.

Marc was elected Chair of the League of California Cities Emergency Services Committee, served on Legal Advocacy Committee, and was President of a 26-member self-insurance JPA for five consecutive years. Marc has delivered papers about a wide variety of municipal law topics at various conferences and webinars for the International Municipal Lawyers Association, League of California Cities, California Association of Joint Powers Authorities, Association for California Governmental Human Resource Professionals, and National Association of Administrative Law Judges.

As San Bruno's city attorney, Marc managed the legal aspects of the city's recovery from the September 2010 PG&E gas pipeline explosion, including recovery from PG&E of \$133 million to rebuild and improve public infrastructure in affected neighborhood, provide compensation to the city through a newly created public entity nonprofit, and fund future fire mitigation.

Marc graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science with Distinction from Stanford University. His longstanding interest in technology, including artificial intelligence, was sparked by the Honors Program in Values, Technology, and Society, for which he completed a thesis titled, "An Integrated Approach to Technology Assessment." He received his legal education from Hastings College of the Law.

In his free time, Marc enjoys volunteering as the Attorney Coach for the Mock Trial team at Oceana High School in Pacifica.