

LOS ANGELES BUSINESS JOURNAL
LEADERS
in Law

2021 NOMINEES

JOIN US FOR THE FREE LIVE VIRTUAL EVENT

Wednesday, November 17, 2021 | 2:00 – 3:30PM

The *Los Angeles Business Journal* will honor the significant role that in-house counsel plays in the success of a business enterprise and recognize the accomplishments of leading attorneys and firms within the Los Angeles business community.

Register at labusinessjournal.com/lil2021



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2021 LEADERS IN LAW AWARDS

Our celebration of the prime examples of legal excellence will take place as part of our 11th annual Leaders in Law Awards virtual event on November 17th from 2:00 pm to 3:30 pm. The event will honor the accomplishments and significant roles that in-house counsel professionals play in the success of business enterprises around the region and will also recognize the achievements of leading attorneys and firms who make a significant impact on the Los Angeles business community.

Attorneys who specialize in litigation, real estate, IP, labor & employment, bankruptcy and corporate excellence in general will be honored, as will in-house counsel professionals from organizations of



various sizes and industries.

Honorees will be recognized for their exceptional legal skill and achievements across the full spectrum of responsibility, exemplary leadership, and contributions to the Los Angeles community at large.

In the following pages we have listed the many tremendous nominees for this year's awards and have included articles covering legal issues that businesses need to know about as we head towards 2022.

We hope you will join us on November 17th as we celebrate the honorees and finalists from what is shaping up to be an inspirational event, featuring appearances from some of the premier business law practitioners among us today.

Baker McKenzie.

Baker McKenzie congratulates our partner

Perrie M. Weiner

on being named one of this year's
Los Angeles Business Journal

Leaders in Law nominees.

Global Litigation Force

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Partner-in-Charge, Los Angeles
Chair, North America Securities Litigation Practice



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IN-HOUSE COUNSEL NOMINEES



J.B. Afoh-Manin
General Counsel & Policy Advisor
Shared Harvest Fund



Elizabeth Atlee
SVP, Chief Ethics & Compliance Officer
CBRE



Elina Avakian
Senior Counsel
Snap Inc.



Jeffrey Bennett
General Counsel
SAG-AFTRA



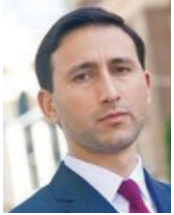
Paul Bokota
Vice-President & General Counsel
The Beauty Health Company



Brandon Braga
General Counsel
The Agency



Terri Cammarano
Senior Vice President of Legal Affairs and General Counsel
Cedars Sinai Health System



Isaiah Costas
Deputy General Counsel
21 Alpha Group



John L. Erikson
SVP, Assistant Secretary, and Corporate Counsel
Wedbush Securities



Caroline Galanty
Senior Vice President - Associate General Counsel
Bank of America



C. Maxwell Garrison
Chief of Staff & In-House Counsel
LeaseLock



Marc Goodman
General Counsel
Pepperdine University



Vartanoush Hindoyan
Associate General Counsel
Facebook, Inc.



Mark Hueppelsheuser
General Counsel
The Oncology Institute of Hope and Innovation



Brent Iloulian
Managing Principal, Real Estate Operations & General Counsel
Hackman Capital



Patrick Kirby
Senior Vice President, General Counsel
Webcor



Culbert Lu
General Counsel
OnPrem A Quest Company



Tanya Menton
Vice President, Litigation
The Walt Disney Company



Nicole Miller
General Counsel
LegalZoom



Patrick Monaghan
Chief Legal Officer
SADA



Joe Moschella
Executive Vice President and General Counsel
Jukin Media

Sheppard Mullin congratulates our Leaders in Law nominees:



Aytan Dahukey



Robert Darwell



Alfred Fraijo, Jr.



Tracey Kennedy

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MICHAEL H. TODISCO

Leaders in Law: Litigation

Leaders in Law: Rising Stars

—Los Angeles Business Journal

Congratulations to all of this year's nominees
for being recognized as Leaders in Law.

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Teryl Murabayashi
Managing Director and Deputy General Counsel
MUFG Union Bank



Mohan Nadig
Director of Legal - US
ByteDance



Angira Patel
In-House Counsel
Burke Williams



Mike Pendleton
Sr. Vice President & General Counsel
Guitar Center



Christopher Ramos
General Counsel & Chief of Staff
Time by Ping, Inc.



Joel Richlin
Vice President and General Counsel
Prime Healthcare



Rosemarie Rodriguez
Director and Assistant General Counsel
MUFG Union Bank



Omer Salik
VP, Litigation and Intellectual Property
Activision



Gregory Schetina
General Counsel and Corporate Secretary
City of Hope



Bill Shafon
VP, Business & Legal Affairs
Grindr LLC



Michael Speaker
Executive Vice President, General Counsel and Corporate Secretary
City National Bank



Jennifer Levin Stearns
Vice President of Operations and General Counsel
Goldco Direct LLC



Aline Taireh
U.S. General Counsel
Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield



Jeannine Taylor
Deputy General Counsel
Keck Medicine of USC



Jo Taylor
Chief Legal Office
Belkin International



Kay Tidwell
EVP, General Counsel & Chief Risk Officer
Hudson Pacific Properties



Betsy Tucci
General Counsel
InStride



Stephanie Villasenor
General Counsel
Norton Simon Museum



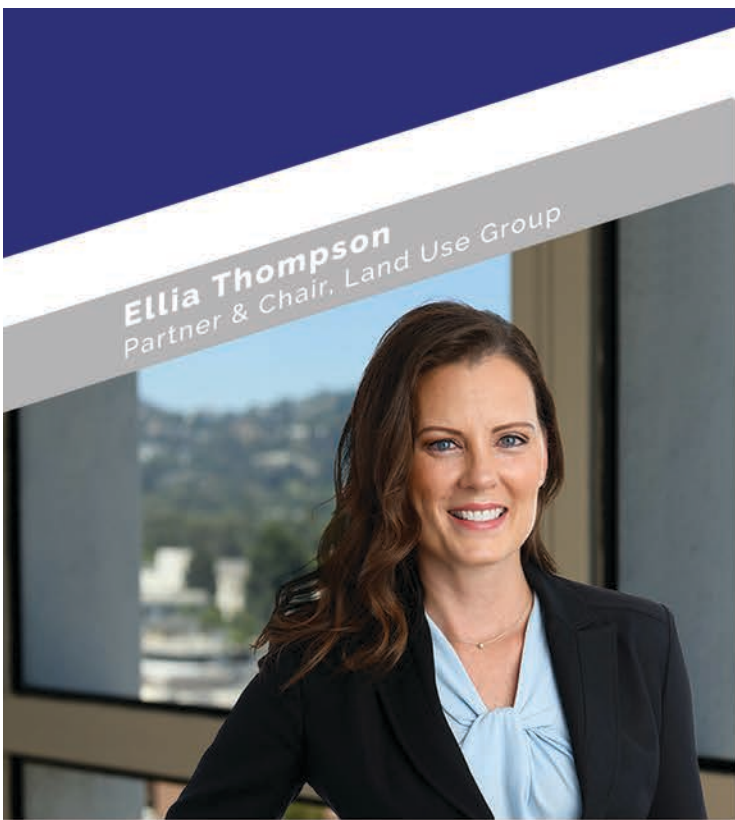
Adam Wergeles
Executive Vice President and General Counsel
Leaf Group



Shawn White
General Counsel
Smith Family Circle
(formerly The Barack Obama Foundation)



Christina Yang
General Counsel
Asian Americans Advancing Justice Los Angeles



“We must believe that we are gifted for something, and that this thing, at whatever cost, must be attained.”

- Marie Curie

ERVIN COHEN & JESSUP LLP
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Snell & Wilmer proudly congratulates our lateral partners Keith Gregory and Rose Sorensen, as well as all of this year's nominees, for being recognized by the Los Angeles Business Journal as 2021 Leaders in Law.



Snell & Wilmer is actively seeking qualified lawyers through ongoing recruiting efforts. Our dedication to nurturing a diverse and inclusive work environment for all attorneys, regardless of life circumstances, to fostering collaborative relationships within our ranks, and to building upon our sound financial position makes the firm an ideal platform for attorneys across our geographic footprint.

Both lateral hires for Snell & Wilmer's Los Angeles office, commercial litigation partner Keith Gregory joined the firm in 2011 and corporate and securities partner Rose Sorensen joined in 2019.

To inquire about potential lateral opportunities, please email attyrecruit@swlaw.com.

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Michael Adamson
Associate
Susman Godfrey LLP



Nahal Adler
Associate
Nixon Peabody LLP



Marissa Alguire
Partner; Deputy Chair, Labor and
Employment Practice Group
Akerman LLP



Andrew Apfelberg
Partner
Greenberg Glusker LLP



Loryn Dunn Arkow
Partner
Stroock & Stroock &
Lavan LLP



Ryan Baker
Co-Managing Partner
Waymaker LLP



Meisa Banh
Attorney
Law Offices of Meisa Banh



Arash Beral
Partner
Blank Rome LLP



John Berlinski
Partner
Kasowitz Benson Torres LLP



Lee Jay Berman
Mediator
Mediation Offices of
Lee Jay Berman



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Partner; Global Vice Chair of the
Restructuring & Special Situations Practice
Latham & Watkins



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Partner
Reuben Raucher & Blum



Karie Boyd
CEO
Boyd Law APC



Lee Brenner
Chair, Entertainment and
Media Litigation Group
Venable LLP



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69 Attorneys Ranked, Including 10 Band One Rankings, Across 17 Regions by *Chambers USA*, April 2021



The choice of a lawyer is an important decision that should not be based solely upon advertisements. Polsinelli PC, Polsinelli LLP in California.

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Irell & Manella LLP



Dan Clivner
Managing Partner
Sidley Austin LLP



Meghan Cocci
Partner, Global Co-Chair of the Hospitality,
Gaming & Leisure Industry Group
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Monisha Coelho
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Peyman Cohan
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Quantum Law Group LLP



Michael Cohen
Partner, Corporate Practice
Blank Rome LLP



Nancy Sher Cohen
Partner in Charge of LA Office,
Executive Committee Member, Leader of the
Insurance Recovery & Counseling Practice Team
Lathrop GPM LLP



Lara Compton
Member
Mintz



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Lucia Coyoca
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Mitchell Silberberg & Knupp LLP



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Aytan Dahukey
Private Equity Team Leader
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& Hampton LLP



Robert Darwell
Partner
Sheppard Mullin Richter
& Hampton LLP



Patricia Daza-Luu
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Michaelides Sullivan LLP



Michael De Vries
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Partner
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Joshua Driskell
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Hanson Bridgett LLP



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Director of Law and Motion; Adjunct Professor
Nguyen Lawyers, ALC;
USC Gould School of Law



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Partner
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Christina N. Goodrich
Partner
K&L Gates



Tanya Greene
Partner
McGuireWoods LLP



Keith Gregory
Partner
Snell & Wilmer

MAKING AN IMPACT

Nixon Peabody LLP congratulates Nahal Adler and David Song on their nominations for *Los Angeles Business Journal Leaders in Law – Rising Stars!* We are proud of your significant contributions to our firm and the positive impact you have on our clients and community.



Nahal Adler
Associate



David Song
Associate



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Shareholder
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MaryBeth Heydt
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Melanie Howard
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Hudock Employment Law Group



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Moez Kaba
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Mitch Kamin
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Tracey Kennedy
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Howard Knee
Partner, Labor & Employment
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Venable Congratulates Lee Brenner, Jennifer Cappelletty, and Belinda Vega

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Greenspoon Marder



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Larson LLP



Salvador LaViña
Partner/Chair of the Real Estate Department
Barnes & Thornburg LLP



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Associate
Bird, Marella, Boxer, Wolpert, Nessim, Dooks, Lincenberg & Rhow, P.C.



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Shareholder
Polsinelli



Aaron Lewis
Partner and Vice Chair of White Collar Defense and Investigations
Covington & Burling LLP



Michael Lindsey
Partner
Steinbrecher & Span LLP



Jonathan Loeb
Partner, Business Litigation
Blank Rome LLP



Cheryl Lott
Shareholder
Buchalter



Nicole Lueddeke
Litigation Associate
Paul Hastings LLP



Gerald Lunn
President
Law Office of Gerald E. Lunn Jr., A Professional Corporation



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Attorney
Albright, Yee & Schmit, APC



Daniel Lynch
Partner
Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP



Michael Mallow
Managing Partner Los Angeles
Shook, Hardy & Bacon



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Trial Attorney, Founding Partner
The Maloney Firm, APC



Scott Malzahn
Co-Managing Partner
Waymaker LLP



Neil Marder
Partner
Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP



Nina Marino
Founding Partner
Kaplan Marino PC



Amanda Mazin
Associate Attorney
Seyfarth Shaw



LATHAM & WATKINS LLP

Congratulations to all the *Los Angeles Business Journal* Leaders in Law nominees including our colleagues **Jeff Bjork** and **Meghan Cocci**.



Jeff Bjork
Partner



Meghan Cocci
Partner

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Managing Partner
Cox, Castle & Nicholson



Byron McLain
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Foley & Lardner LLP



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Insurance Recovery Group
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Abigail O'Brient
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Founding and Managing Partner
Olivarez Madruga
Lemieux O'Neill, LLP



Jamice Oxley
Counsel
Pryor Cashman LLP



Malhar Pagay
Partner
Pachulski Stang Ziehl & Jones LLP



Katerina Perreault
Senior Counsel
Katerina Perreault Law



Fisher Phillips is proud of our trailblazer nominees and congratulates all the **2021 Leaders in Law nominees**



Lonnie D. Giamela
Partner, Los Angeles & Irvine Offices
Litigation Nominee



Hannah Sweiss
Associate, Woodland Hills & Los Angeles Offices
Labor & Employment Nominee

With more than 500 attorneys in 36 offices across the United States, Fisher Phillips is a national labor and employment firm providing practical business solutions for employers' workplace legal problems. We regularly advise and counsel clients on issues surrounding wage and hour, employment discrimination and harassment, litigation, workplace safety, immigration, trade secrets and non-competes, and more.

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Peter Law Group



Ardy Pirnia
Founding Partner
Pirnia Law Group



Jennifer Post
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Partner
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Bitra Rahebi
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Gerald Sauer
Founding Partner
Sauer & Wagner LLP



Cozen O'Connor congratulates and applauds our colleague Devin Donohue and all of this year's Los Angeles Business Journal Leaders in Law nominees.

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FIRM ATTORNEY NOMINEES



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Partner
TLD Law



Christian Scali
Founder and Managing Partner
Scali Rasmussen, PC



Lauren Schneider
Partner and Managing Partner of
Lewis Roca's California Offices
Lewis Roca



Glenn Sherman
Partner
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Smiley, LLP



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Roman Silberfeld
Partner, National Trial Chair
Robins Kaplan LLP



Jeffrey Sklar
Founding Partner
Sklar Kirsh LLP



Casey Sobhani
Partner, Head of Leasing (US)
DLA Piper



David Soffer
Attorney
Kanin Soffer, LLP



Tyson Sohagi
Partner
The Sohagi Law Group PLC



David Song
Associate
Nixon Peabody LLP



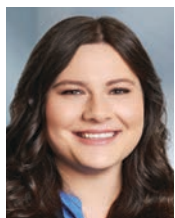
Rose B. Sorensen
Partner
Snell & Wilmer



Kalpana Srinivasan
Managing Partner
Susman Godfrey LLP



Karina Sterman
Partner
Greenberg Glusker LLP



Emily Stierwalt
Associate
Waymaker LLP



Geoffrey Stover
Litigation Partner
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Peter Stris
Founding Partner
Stris & Maher LLP



Kenneth Sulzer
Office Head Los Angeles and
California Practice Chair
Constangy, Brooks, Smith & Prophete, LLP



Brian Sun
Partner
Norton Rose Fulbright



Hannah Sweiss
Associate
Fisher Phillips

CONGRATULATIONS

Los Angeles Business Journal
Leaders in Law: Buchalter Nominees

Cheryl M. Lott
C. Tyler Ohanian &
Marcus J. Williams



Cheryl Lott
Shareholder



C. Tyler Ohanian
Shareholder



Marcus Williams
Shareholder

Buchalter
AZ | CA | OR | UT | WA



FIRM ATTORNEY NOMINEES



Guillermo Tello
Member
Clark Hill PLC



Jennifer Terry
Partner
Reed Smith LLP



Shawn Thomas
Partner
Sanders Roberts LLP



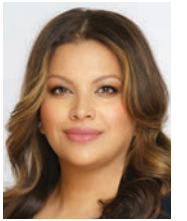
Ellia Thompson
Partner and Chair of the
Land Use Department
Ervin Cohen & Jessup LLP



Michael Todisco
Associate
Hueston Hennigan LLP



Jason Tokoro
Partner
Miller Barondess, LLP



Heidi Vaquerano
Partner
Fox Rothschild LLP



Stephanie Vasquez
Associate
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Lemieux O'Neill, LLP



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Co-Chair, West Coast
Litigation Group
Venable LLP



Emily Burkhardt Vicente
Partner, Co-Chair Labor and
Employment
Hunton Andrews Kurth LLP



Bradley Wallace
President, Founder
The Wallace Firm



Perrie Weiner
Partner in Charge of Los Angeles Office,
Chair, North America Securities
Litigation Group
Baker McKenzie



Amy Wells
Partner
Cox, Castle & Nicholson



Charlotte Wen
Associate
Irell & Manella LLP



Alexa Whiteside
Attorney
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Rodney Wickers
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Donna Wilson
CEO and Managing Partner
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Richard Wittbrodt
Partner
Gibbs Giden



David Wood
Partner
Barnes & Thornburg LLP



Kerry Garvis Wright
Partner and Chair of the
Employment Department
Glaser Weil LLP

Congratulations, Culbert!

OnPrem Solution Partners would like to congratulate Culbert Lu on being selected as a finalist in the Los Angeles Business Journal's 2021 Leaders in Law Awards.

Thank you for your leadership, partnership, and counsel in guiding OnPrem forward.



Congratulations

SAG-AFTRA General Counsel
Jeffrey Bennett
and all of the
esteemed nominees of the
2021 Leaders in Law Awards.



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Timothy Yoo
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CONGRATULATIONS
TO ALL OF OUR
2021 LEADERS IN LAW NOMINEES!

2021 LEADERS IN LAW
Los Angeles Business Journal

Congratulations
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Leaders in Law: Advancing Excellence in Legal Education

In every field, effective leadership is essential to the success of an organization. And at the USC Gould School of Law, the focus is not only on teaching the law, but also preparing future leaders.

The first law school in Southern California and one of the top-ranked nationwide, the USC Gould School has established a distinctive legacy of educating leaders across industries, sectors and businesses — offering a broad range of practice-centered academic programs, as well as graduate certificates in specialized professional areas.

USC Gould provides students with a dynamic learning environment, both on-campus and online. Multi-disciplinary degree programs include: the Juris Doctor (JD); Master of Dispute Resolution (MDR); Master of Laws (LLM); LLM in Alternative Dispute Resolution; LLM in International Business and Economic Law; LLM in Privacy Law and Cybersecurity; Master of International Trade Law and Economics (MITLE); and Master of Comparative Law (MCL).

In addition, five years ago, USC Gould added an innovative chapter to its legacy of leadership training, with the launch of the online Master of Studies in Law (MSL) degree. The MSL is a groundbreaking program that is specially designed for non-lawyer professionals to gain a solid understanding of legal concepts and issues related to their fields.

USC MSL: REDEFINING ONLINE EDUCATION

From contracts and compliance, to finance and health care, to cybersecurity and IP, a growing number of today's roles and responsibilities intersect with legal matters.

As the business landscape has shifted, legal education has evolved as well, with USC Gould leading the way to meet these demands. Through the MSL program, the USC Gould School helps non-lawyers – in a variety of roles – enhance their business expertise with an essential legal education.

INTERACTIVE AND FLEXIBLE FORMAT

In the MSL program, students have the convenience of completing the degree 100% online, and the flexibility to study part-time — making it an ideal format for working professionals. No LSAT or GRE test is required; no prior law degree is required either. Generous scholarships are available and considered for all applicants.

The MSL degree enables graduates to contribute to their roles with a more thorough understanding of the law. MSL degrees can apply diverse career goals and business industries, including those who deal with human resources, real estate, entertainment, government, or who work closely with their organization's legal department. The program provides students with a working knowledge of the law to amplify their career impact.

Broadcast news anchor Nick Ciletti (MSL Class of 2022) noted, "I love that USC offers the MSL program entirely online and it's really convenient for my sometimes-unpredictable schedule — you never know when breaking news will happen. I also really appreciate the one-on-one attention my advisers and professors are able to provide us and that's something that sets USC and Gould apart."

The benefits extend beyond the classroom. Graduates of the MSL program gain access to the lifelong and worldwide Trojan Family network, which spans more than 14,000 USC Gould alumni.

CUSTOMIZED FOR YOUR CAREER GOALS

MSL students can tailor their educational experience by pursuing a certificate aligned with their area of interest. These certificates can be completed at no additional cost, as part of the MSL program.

Certificate programs include:

- Business Law
- Compliance
- Entertainment Law and Industry
- Financial Compliance
- Human Resources Law and Compliance
- Privacy Law and Cybersecurity
- Health Care Compliance

In addition, the MSL program recently expanded its online Entertainment Law and

Industry Certificate with new course offerings that cover Dealmaking in the Entertainment Industry; Digital Media Transactions; Music Law in Practice; and Negotiation Skills.

To learn more about the USC Gould School of Law's innovative MSL program, visit bit.ly/usc-law-msl.

EXPLORE CORPORATE OPPORTUNITIES

How can a corporate partnership benefit both careers and companies? Organizations can support their homegrown talent as well as promote employee retention and skills development, through custom partnerships with the USC Gould School of Law.

USC Gould collaborates with numerous organizations that offer scholarship savings to employees, including for the online Master of Studies in Law (MSL) for non-lawyer professionals.

- Benefits for corporate partners and their employees include:
- Generous partner scholarships
- Personalized application support
- Individual academic advising
- Interactive, convenient and flexible online experience
- And more

To explore partnership opportunities or to learn more about partner benefits, please contact: corporatecustomed@law.usc.edu — or visit <https://bit.ly/usc-corporate-ed>.

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Navigating SPAC Risks During Heightened SEC Scrutiny

By PERRIE M. WEINER and
DESIRÉE HUNTER-REAY

Over the last twelve months, the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has bolstered oversight of special purpose acquisition companies (SPACs) in response to shareholder allegations of fraud, conflicts of interest, and inadequate disclosures relating to de-SPAC M & A transactions.

For example, in an aggressive and ground-breaking decision, the SEC somewhat recently announced enforcement actions against a SPAC, its sponsor and CEO, and the target company and its former CEO before a shareholder vote on the merger. The enforcement action arose from allegations that the proposed target company misrepresented material facts and omitted or made misstatements in its public disclosures to the SEC and proxy materials intended for investors, in violation of the Securities Act and the Exchange Act.

Securities class action lawsuits targeting SPACs have also increased. This year, 25 lawsuits have been filed, a substantial increase compared to the 10 suits that were filed in 2019 and 2020 combined.

Yet, despite the SEC's heightened scrutiny and the unprecedented uptick in securities class action lawsuits, SPACs remain an attractive option for investors and those hoping to take their companies public.

'Securities class action lawsuits targeting SPACs have also increased.'

Indeed, even former President Donald Trump has joined the SPAC craze. The former president recently completed a de-SPAC transaction with Digital World Acquisition Corp., a SPAC, to bring his social platform Trump Media & Technology Group public. Former President Trump's announcement came just days after the SEC urged SPACs to disclose conflicts of interest, again signalling the Commission's intent to regulate the SPAC world.

Clearly, the heightened risk of SEC scrutiny and securities lawsuits have not deterred market participants from engaging in SPAC transactions. Just recently, NBA star Kevin Durant announced his intent to launch a \$200 million blank-check company, making him the latest celebrity to get in on the SPAC craze. Given the SEC's continued scrutiny, it is imperative that SPACs, their sponsors, and target companies implement measures to reduce the risk of litigation and avoid SEC scrutiny. Market participants should consider the following preventive measures:

Conflicts. SPACs must consider all potential conflicts of interests and whether their public disclosures adequately disclose them. SPACs must be particularly cognizant of conflicts with the ultimate de-SPAC M&A targets and misaligned incentives with sponsors that are more keen on completing the merger (especially if they are bumping up against the two-year statutory time frame) than conducting adequate due diligence. SPACs should also always maintain adequate directors and officers insurance to protect high-level sponsors should any issues arise.

Due Diligence. SPAC sponsors should hire reputable third-party investigators and top notch audit firms and use extreme caution when relying on unverified statements from proposed merger targets. They should document all diligence efforts undertaken in connection with mergers and err on the side of more comprehensive disclosures.

Accounting. SPACs must prepare their internal accounting controls, so that the post-merger publicly-traded company will meet the SEC's reporting demands. Sponsors should engage in a documented, critical review and ensure that financial projections are based on reasonable grounds and not unsupported opinions. Sponsors should also consider hiring outside financial advisors to determine whether such projections are sound. A reputable accounting firm may also provide value by addressing concerns from both the market and

regulators on target companies' accounting integrity and governance weaknesses.

Fairness Opinions. SPACs should hire reputable third-parties to prepare fairness opinions to mitigate litigation risk and evidence proper due diligence. Fairness opinions also provide value to shareholders as an indication of the quality of the proposed transaction. A diligently prepared fairness opinion may offer value to a SPAC's board, which may then rely on it to demonstrate that the board complied with its duty of care.

Litigation Preparation. To limit litigation risks, market participants should ask experienced litigation counsel, rather than relying solely on their usual corporate counsel, for input on the documents being prepared, relied upon, and disseminated. Litigation counsel should also weigh in on the recommended strategic approach in managing litigation risk, and can also provide input on insider trading risks that the post-merger company may face.

By following these measures, market participants can avoid or, at the very least, minimize the chances of facing an adverse outcome of SEC investigations and/or enforcement actions and related follow on or concurrent securities class actions and/or shareholder derivative actions.

Perrie M. Weiner is a partner and Desirée Hunter-Reay is an associate with Baker & McKenzie LLP. Learn more at bakermckenzie.com.

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State Bar Board of Trustees Aims to Improve Discipline System

At its meeting in July, the State Bar Board of Trustees took significant steps to strengthen the discipline system, establishing a special committee—the Committee on the Special Discipline Case Audit—to propose a comprehensive corrective action plan. The Board also directed this new committee, chaired by Trustee José Cisneros, to work with staff to develop recommendations to strengthen regulation of attorney client trust accounts.

“The Board’s actions demonstrate resolve to identify and remedy shortcomings in our discipline system that impact the State Bar’s ability to carry out its public protection mission,” said Board Chair Sean SeLegue. “That includes not only ensuring that attorney ethical violations are properly investigated and prosecuted but also innovative means of preventing misconduct and harm to the public from occurring in the first place.”

Recommendations to be considered for regulation of client trust accounts to prevent misappropriation include:

- Conducting proactive, random audits of attorney client trust accounts;
- Requiring some or all attorneys to have their trust accounts regularly audited by Certified Public Accountants;
- Requiring annual self-funded audits and reporting of client trust accounts;
- Requiring bonding or the use of third-party escrow accounts for some or all attorneys;
- Proposing new and amended statutes,

State Bar rules, rules of professional conduct, and other rules governing attorney conduct as well as standards governing discipline for client trust account violations; and

- Assessing technology and other tools that can be employed in this effort.

Such changes would be groundbreaking and put California in the forefront of protecting funds that attorneys hold in trust on behalf of clients and others. The Board expects to finalize a set of approved recommendations for public comment no later than December 31, 2021.

In other actions at the July meeting focused on the discipline system, the Board:

- Approved a five-year plan to develop preventative education for attorneys that will include interactive e-learning courses and self-assessments. Proactive approaches to help prevent attorney misconduct represent a growing area of focus for the State Bar, particularly as it also works to eliminate racial disparities in discipline. The first such course and self-assessment, scheduled to launch by the end of this year, will be on client trust accounting practices.
- Directed staff to work with the Legislature to modify and modernize the existing statutory backlog standard with improved case processing standards. The longstanding statutory definition of the State Bar’s disciplinary case backlog—the number of cases as of December 31 each year that were pending beyond six months after receipt—does not account for variations in case

types or complexity. The State Auditor’s April 2021 report on the State Bar recommended that the backlog standard be revisited to improve how the agency is measured and how resources are allocated.

- Approved circulation for a 45-day public comment period amendments to Rule 2201 of the Rules of the State Bar. The rule addresses the recusal of the chief trial counsel in discipline cases involving individuals with close ties to the State Bar. The amendments are designed to further improve oversight and integrity of the Rule 2201 program.

Among other actions at the July meeting, the board approved distribution in 2022 of \$35.5 million from the Legal Services Trust Fund—a 48 percent increase over the 2021 amount. The fund’s revenue comes from Interest on Lawyers’ Trust Accounts (IOLTA) and other sources and is distributed to approximately 100 legal aid organizations in California. Due to the pandemic and its economic fallout, interest rates plummeted in March 2020. By year-end 2020, IOLTA interest revenue had decreased to \$26.2 million. The Legal Services Trust Fund Commission and the Board approved use of reserve funds and additional revenue from other sources to maintain the \$55 million in legal aid funding already approved for 2020. The grant distribution for 2021 was cut to \$23.5 million.

Meanwhile, the Legislature and Governor

“The Board’s actions demonstrate resolve to identify and remedy shortcomings in our discipline system that impact the State Bar’s ability to carry out its public protection mission.”

have provided for substantial increases to legal aid funding in the 2021–2022 budget. The Budget Act provides a \$50 million increase to the Equal Access Fund, of which \$45 million will be administered by the State Bar. The Budget Act includes another \$40 million per year for three years for homelessness prevention.

The State Bar of California’s mission is to protect the public and includes the primary functions of licensing, regulation and discipline of attorneys; the advancement of the ethical and competent practice of law; and support of efforts for greater access to, and inclusion in, the legal system.

Learn more at calbar.ca.gov.

LACBA Forms Diversity in the Profession Section to Address Disparity of Underrepresented Groups

LACBA’s 28th section will administer continuing legal education seminars, provide professional networking, and promote equality, diversity, and inclusion within the legal profession

The Los Angeles County Bar Association’s (LACBA) Board of Trustees announced earlier this year the approval of its new Diversity in the Profession Section. LACBA’s 28th Section is dedicated to facilitating full and equal participation in the legal profession by historically underrepresented community members based on unique characteristics such as age, color, physical and mental (dis)ability, ethnicity, family or marital status, sex, gender identity or expression, geographic location, language, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, military and veteran status, and learning styles, among others.

“LACBA continues to be at the forefront of promoting diversity, equality, and inclusion within the legal community, and our Diversity in the Profession Committee has been active within LACBA for many years,” said Megan Whipp, chair of the Diversity in the Profession Section. “Our Committee saw the



increased demand to expand our efforts and address head-on our goal of achieving a more diverse legal landscape. The obvious direction,

for us, was to form a Section dedicated to these important objectives. We are aware of the many challenges ahead, but we are stead-

fast in our efforts to promote diversity in the legal profession,” she continued.

Whipp is joined on the Executive Committee by treasurer, Hon. Sam Lucas; secretary, Christine Goodman; and vice chairs, Eric Chan, Brian Moskal, Lydia Liberio, Kendra Thomas, Ann Park, Diane Reyes, and Carlos Dominguez.

The mission of LACBA’s Diversity in the Profession Section is to increase and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in the legal profession, including by advancing the careers of diverse lawyers and legal professionals, providing leadership and educational opportunities, promoting policies and programs that advance diversity, equality, and inclusion, and providing mentorship opportunities for lawyers and students in the diversity pipeline. LACBA members can register for the section beginning on April 29, 2021.

LACBA was founded in 1878 and is one of the largest voluntary metropolitan bar associations in the country. LACBA serves attorneys, judges, and other legal professionals through 28 sections, committees, networking events, live and on-demand CLE programs, and pro bono opportunities, as well as public service and informational resources.

For more information on LACBA’s 28 sections, visit lacba.org/sections.