

LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: Litigators & Trial Attorneys



THERE IS A SPECIAL BREED OR ATTORNEY THAT NEEDS TO TRANSCEND EXPERT COMPREHENSION OF THE LEGAL system – the litigator. Lawyers who go to the proverbial mat to fight for their clients before judges and jury have their own unique sets of skills. In this special section we share profiles of the very best litigators and trial attorneys in the region. These are the trusted advisors you want in your corner in court.

We've alphabetically compiled this lineup of superb litigation specialists, along with information about their careers, practice and relevant recent successes they've achieved. Congratulations to the attorneys who made our class of '23.

Methodology: The professionals featured in these pages did not pay to be included. Their profiles were drawn from nomination materials submitted to the Los Angeles Business Journal. Those selected for inclusion were reviewed by the editorial department and chosen based on a demonstration of impact made on the profession and on the Los Angeles community.

LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: LITIGATORS & TRIAL ATTORNEYS

**VINEET DUBEY**

Partner & Co-Founder
Custodio & Dubey LLP

Vineet Dubey has dedicated his law career to pursuing environmental litigation, primarily suing companies that are selling goods to the public containing toxic and cancer-causing chemicals. Over the past 10 years, he has brought forth notable lawsuits against food manufacturers and grocery stores, including: Nurture Inc., Beech-Nut Nutrition Corp. and Gerber Products Co. for high levels of lead and arsenic in their baby foods; Target for its branded foods with high levels of lead; and Kroger stores and Trader Joe's for high levels of lead in numerous food products.

Because of Dubey's advocacy, thousands of tainted products have been taken off the shelves or reformulated. According to the California Attorney General's Office, Dubey has settled more Proposition 65 matters than any other attorney in the country for each of the last three years. This relentless dedication has forced violators to pay millions of dollars in civil penalties and fees.

**ERIC EARLY**

Founding and Managing Partner
Early Sullivan Wright Gizer & McRae LLP

Eric Early, founding and managing partner of Early Sullivan Wright Gizer & McRae LLP, has earned a national reputation for his representation of Fortune 500 companies, small business entrepreneurs and individuals around America, and has built one of the best and most respected boutique law firms in the nation. He is one of the go-to attorneys for all of the major national title insurance companies including Fidelity National Financial, First American Title Insurance Company and Stewart Title.

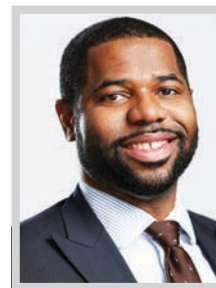
Early is also representing a group of concerned Santa Barbara residents against the Santa Barbara Unified School District and Just Communities Central Coast. The case is the first lawsuit in the nation filed against what is now commonly known as critical race theory. Additionally, Early represents coal industry legend Don Blankenship in federal court in West Virginia against the entire spectrum of mainstream media in a landmark defamation action.

**CHRISTOPHER EPPICH**

Partner
Covington & Burling LLP

Chris Eppich helps clients in the health care and other industries successfully navigate complex litigation challenges from pre-trial to verdict. Eppich co-led a team of Covington lawyers representing McKesson securing a full defense verdict for McKesson in a first-of-its-kind opioid jury trial under Georgia's "Drug Dealer Liability Act." Plaintiffs in the case were seeking more than \$250 million dollars in damages and brought claims against McKesson and other licensed wholesale distributors under Georgia's Drug Dealer Liability Act. The victory followed four weeks of trial with over 60 witnesses and has already resulted in the dismissal of another case under the same theory.

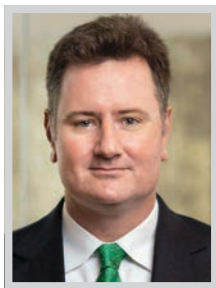
He also co-led a team of Covington lawyers representing McKesson in a three-month federal Bellwether trial resulting in a ruling that the plaintiffs failed to prove that the distributors had faulty controls against the diversion of opioids for illicit use and did not cause the opioid crisis.

**MELVIN L. FELTON, II**

Partner
Sanders Roberts LLP

Melvin Felton, II is a partner at Sanders Roberts LLP. He represents corporations and individuals in a wide range of employment and business litigation matters. He has extensive experience advising in all stages of litigation, mediation and arbitration, having successfully resolved nearly 500 matters in a variety of different industries, including construction, professional services, retail, finance, healthcare, manufacturing and real estate.

Felton takes a client-centered approach to litigation and advice, focusing on each client's particular sensitivities, culture and bottom line. He takes a personal investment in the success of his clients. Felton serves as outside general counsel for multiple clients and a lead outside counsel for numerous Fortune 500 companies and large municipalities. Recently, Felton obtained full summary judgment on a sexual harassment, gender discrimination, defamation matter, after winning an Anti-SLAPP motion, resulting in a client-victory and reimbursement of attorney's fees.

**ASHLEY FICKEL**

Leader, Financial Services Litigation Practice Group;
Member
Dykema Gossett PLLC

Ashley Fickel is the leader of Dykema's Financial Services Litigation Practice Group. When high-profile, high-dollar consumer claims threaten a company's financial, operational, or reputational interests, Fickel steps in to deliver robust, strategic defense. He represents financial institutions, manufacturers and a diverse group of businesses in complex legal disputes. Fickel brings extensive trial experience and sound business judgment to defending financial institutions, automotive and other manufacturers, and a diverse group of businesses facing a broad spectrum of consumer claims and class actions.

Managing cases from intake through appeal, Fickel leverages his formidable advocacy skills to defend businesses facing individual and class action claims involving consumer financial services, consumer fraud, privacy, products liability, catastrophic injury and complex business disputes. Most recently, Fickel has been defending businesses, including major financial institutions and manufacturers, from various consumer and privacy-based claims.

**MICHAEL FREEDMAN**

Founder and Principal
The Freedman Firm PC

Michael Freedman has quickly established himself as one of the top criminal defense and trial attorneys of his generation. After serving as a federal prosecutor, he established The Freedman Firm in 2021 and has already grown it to a total of four lawyers. Freedman currently represents numerous high profile clients including Harvey Weinstein, Bill Cosby and Trey Songz.

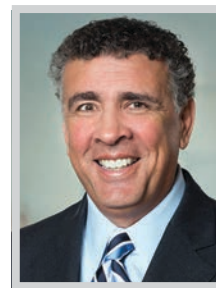
In 2022, Freedman tried three trials, including winning an acquittal for R. Kelly's former manager in the Southern District of New York, securing no punitive damages for Bill Cosby following a month-long trial, and representing a lawyer in a contempt of court prosecution. Freedman's federal criminal practice currently involves representing Deputy Mayor Ray Chan in the Huizar/City Hall Corruption prosecution, the lead defendant in a headline-grabbing murder for hire and arson prosecution, and several doctors in healthcare fraud prosecutions in Los Angeles and New York.

**SASHA FRID**

Partner
Miller Barondess, LLP

An accomplished litigator and trial lawyer with significant victories for plaintiffs and defendants, Sasha Frid is one of the founding partners of Miller Barondess. Frid represents Mötley Crüe in a highly-publicized lawsuit against former guitarist Mick Mars. After Mars publicly resigned and was offered a generous compensation package, he sued the band for allegedly forcing him out after 41 years. An arbitration is also pending.

Frid worked on a successful Federal jury defense verdict for Virtual Sonics (cutting-edge technology company specializing in digital music instruments) and its founders, composers Jeremy and Julian Soule. Plaintiffs, former investors Scott and Skyler Mednick, sought millions in compensation. The jury verdict, delivered in less than an hour, wiped out plaintiffs' claims entirely. Frid also represented Peninsula Hotel Beverly Hills against Waldorf-Astoria Hotel Beverly Hills in a more than \$50 million trade secret theft case which settled right before trial under confidential terms.

**STEPHEN GARCIA**

Senior Partner
Garcia & Artigliere

Representing plaintiffs for nearly 40 years in thousands of elder abuse and nursing home neglect cases, Stephen Garcia has dedicated his career to protecting the interests of the elderly. To date, his efforts have resulted in over \$1.3 billion in settlements and awards that have served to bring at-fault parties to justice. In the past two years alone, he has secured more than \$150 million in verdicts and settlements.

Garcia served as lead counsel in published appellate opinions affecting long-term health care litigation, including *Fenimore v. Regents of University of California* (2016) wherein the Court held that, "[A] violation of staffing regulations may provide a basis for finding neglect. In 2018, the Ninth Circuit affirmed the prevailing notion of *Fenimore*, rejecting improper removal of actions to Federal Court to stymie timely acquisition of justice for elder and infirm adults.