# RECAP: LEADERS IN LAW AWARDS

**NOVEMBER 4, 2019**

**San Diego Business Journal**

**LEADERS IN LAW AWARDS 2019**

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Letter from the Publisher

The San Diego Business Journal’s inaugural Leaders in Law event honored 17 of San Diego’s top lawyers and in-house general counsel attorneys. We received more than 200 nominations. From these we selected 105 finalists. The range of our nominees’ accomplishments and community involvement was impressive. It made the process of selecting winners all the more challenging. We even had one tie in the labor and employment category.

We revealed the winners during an Oct. 24 gathering at the University Club Atop Symphony Towers. The event brought together 200 people, including San Diego’s best legal minds and their associates. The University Club was a superb venue, offering a spectacular view from the roof of Symphony Towers in downtown San Diego. I want to thank Frank Bost, general manager at the University Club, and his staff for their hospitality. I also want to thank one of our sponsors, Southwest Airlines, for providing three sets of round-trip airline tickets as raffle prizes. Ron Marcus, director of marketing with the San Diego County Bar Association, had the pleasure of selecting the ticket winners at random.

Kicking off the awards presentation was Chris Olmsted, shareholder with Ogletree Deakins. Event judges then presented winners with their awards. There were five judges who reviewed and scored finalists’ applications.

On behalf of the San Diego Business Journal, I want to thank our judging panel: Chris Bryant, president and CEO of the San Diego Employers Association; Peter Callstrom, president and CEO of the San Diego Workforce Partnership; Tracie Childs, co-chair of Ogletree Deakins; David H. Crean, Ph.D., managing director for healthcare and life sciences at Objective Capital Partners; and Rana Sampson, director and community relations ambassador for MUFG Union Bank’s Southern California and San Diego divisions, and our sponsors for making this event possible: Ogletree Deakins, Southwest Airlines, Union Bank and Green Rope.

They join us in congratulating our winners and finalists.

Barb Chodos
President & Publisher

JUDGES

CHRIS BRYANT
President & CEO
San Diego Employers Association

Peter Callstrom has led nonprofit organizations in the San Diego region since 1998 including services to people with disabilities, the homeless, and under-represented job seekers. He joined the Workforce Partnership as CEO/Director in 2012. With an annual budget of $30 million from multiple sources and investors, the Workforce Partnership funds, manages and delivers workforce programs to empower job seekers to meet the needs of regional employers. The Workforce Partnership also works with local and federal agencies in order to understand trends and issues in our economy.

PETER CALLSTROM
President & CEO
San Diego Workforce Partnership

TRACIE CHILDS
Co-chair
Ogletree Deakins

Tracie Childs is the co-chair of Ogletree Deakins’ California Class Action Practice Group. She represents a wide array of employers in defending class actions and complex employment practices issues including wrongful terminations, discrimination, harassment, whistleblower, and other federal and state law claims. Ms. Childs clients include large national retail companies, national and pharmaceutical companies, government contractors and non-profit organizations. Ms. Childs handles legal matters from inception to verdict. Her practice also includes counseling of employers regarding employment practices.

DAVID H. CREAN
Managing Director
Objective Capital Partners

David H. Crean is a Managing Director at Objective Capital Partners where he leads the firm’s M&A and partnering transactions with healthcare and life science companies, government contractors and non-profit organizations and serves on the Union Bank Foundation Board of Directors, and as a contributing author for Forbes Dr. Crean was recognized by M&A Advisors for the 2019 Investment Banker of the Year (Midlands), SDBJ’s 2018 Healthcare Hero, and the 2017 Thought Leader of the Year.

RANA SAMPSON
Community Relations Ambassador
MUFG Union Bank

As MUFG Union Bank’s Community Relations Ambassador for the Southern California region, Rana Sampson supports internal brand initiatives and services on the Union Bank Foundation Area Committee. Prior to joining the bank in 2014, Rana spent several years working for crime intervention and safety programs with an emphasis on drug enforcement and an NYPD police officer, underground reconnaissance, Director of Public Safety, international crime reduction consultant and Vice President at a San Diego nonprofit focused on foster children with mental and behavioral health challenges. Rana holds a law degree from Harvard and a Bachelor’s degree from Barnard College, Columbia University.
Leaders in Law Awards Reflect Well on Legal Community

RECOGNITION: Judges Narrowed 105 Finalists To 17 Winners

The San Diego Business Journal held its annual Leaders in Law Awards event on October 24th, where outstanding lawyers were honored for their contributions to the legal profession and the community.

San Diego, CA – Seaport San Diego’s President Paul Najar was among the award recipients. He was honored for his leadership and contributions to the legal community.

“Paul Najar has demonstrated exceptional leadership and has been a driving force in the San Diego legal community,” said San Diego Business Journal Publisher Bruce Graves. “His work with Seaport San Diego and Axos Bank has been highly regarded, and he has consistently shown a commitment to community service and legal excellence.”

Najar received the award for his work as General Counsel at Axos Bank, where he has led the legal team in navigating complex legal issues and advancing the company’s strategic initiatives.

The Leaders in Law Awards recognize the top attorneys in San Diego County, and this year’s event attracted more than 500 attendees. The awards ceremony featured speeches from judges, lawyers, and industry leaders, and included recognition of the 2019 honorees.

The event was held at the Higgs Fletcher & Mack headquarters in downtown San Diego, with keynote speeches from prominent figures in the legal and business worlds.

The 2019 Leaders in Law Awards honored a total of 17 lawyers in 10 categories, including Business Law, Corporate Law, Estate Planning, and Personal Injury.

The full list of honorees can be found on the San Diego Business Journal website. For more information, contact Bruce Graves at bruce@sandiegobusinessjournal.com.
place to live, work and shop,” she said. She is also active in the Urban Land Institute, the San Diego Volunteer Lawyers Program and the Innovation District Project. Her pro bono work includes the San Diego Community Legal Clinic, where she represents numerous clients in various matters, including family law, immigration, and housing disputes.

Neva’s degree is in business and real estate law from the University of Minnesota Law School. She received both degrees magna cum laude.

“From a small-town boy in Idaho to a rising star in San Diego, I feel honored to be among you,” Neva said in accepting his award. “I’m grateful for the support and opportunities provided by Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman.”

Neva came to San Diego from Minnesota five years ago and quickly immersed herself in the community. Her pro bono work includes the San Diego Volunteer Lawyers Program and the Innovation District Project. She is also active in the Urban Land Institute, the San Diego Partnership and the NTC Foundation.

“My goal is to help make San Diego the best place to live, work and shop,” she said.

**WINNER**

**WINNER**

**WINNER**

**WINNER**

**WINNER**

Sheppard Mullin congratulates our seven Leaders in Law finalists:

Whitney Hodges
Peter Klee
Stephen Korniczky
Stephen LaSala
Nancy Scull
Lisa Yun

All of these outstanding attorneys exemplify Sheppard Mullin’s commitment to put clients first and provide superior legal representation.

**WINNER**

**WINNER**

**WINNER**

**WINNER**

**WINNER**

John Phillips & Fish & Richardson is being recognized for his work in patent law. Phillips represents companies of all sizes — from startups to Fortune 500 corporations — across all industries in inter partes and ex parte post-grant proceedings, due diligence and freedom-to-operate investigations, patent oppositions and strategic patent procurement. He has been a firm leader in post-grant proceedings for more than 10 years, having handled over 114 appearances before the Board.

Phillips received a bachelor of science degree in electrical engineering, cum laude, from the University of Michigan, and a J.D. from George Washington University Law School, where he was a writing fellow. Phillips’ pro bono work includes serving as an attorney for the Alliance for Children’s Rights, a Los Angeles-based nonprofit protecting the rights of impoverished, abused and neglected youth.

**WINNER**

**WINNER**

**WINNER**

**WINNER**

**WINNER**

Megan Chung is the top scoring attorney in the intellectual property category. As managing partner of Kilpatrick Townsend in San Diego office, Chung is the first female Asian-American to lead a firm office. She heads the patent litigation team in San Diego and focuses her practice on complex and technical intellectual property litigation.

She has evaluated intellectual property and litigated claims addressing technology as varied as software, augmented reality, biotechnology, medical devices and fishing lures. She defended Edwards Lifesciences against Medtronic in a case involving surgical heart valves, and the firm led a countersuit. The parties eventually settled multiple cases and exchanged cross-licenses. Medtronic paid $1 billion in license fees.

Chung received her bachelor’s degree in human biology and a master’s in education from Stanford. She received her J.D. from UC Davis. Through her pro bono work, Chung has successfully won asylum hearings for women who are persecuted based on their religious and/or political beliefs.
Diego and Mother Attorney Mentoring-San Diego. From the University of San Diego. Her application lists the community, she said. Approaching in cyber law, it is a great recognition—to create a culture of cyber-awareness; electronic policies/protocols/trainings within an organization; breaches; business email compromises; developing crisis management and forensic investigations for data and protocols; information security and data privacy; privacy/security by design, cyber risk management attorney in the cybersecurity category.

The attorney said it was "a tremendous honor" as a partner at Sheppard Mullin, Phillips covers privacy/security by design, cyber risk management and mitigation; c/workplace policies; compliance with data regulations; retention/destruction policies and protocols, information security and data privacy, cross-management and forensic investigations for data breaches, business email compromises; developing policies/protocols/trainings within an organization to create a culture of cyber-awareness, electronic discovery, and social media issues. The attorney said it was "a tremendous honor" to get the award. "With the tsunami of litigation approaching in cyber law, it is a great recognition—to be recognized by the San Diego Business Journal and the community," she said. Phillips received her undergraduate and law degrees from the University of San Diego. Her application lists 20 charitable and professional organizations that receive her help. She founded the Women in Discovery-San Diego and Mother Attorney Mentoring-San Diego.

Pillsbury is proud to congratulate our 2019 SDBJ Leaders in Law finalists.

CONGRATULATIONS
William V. Whelan 2019 LEADERS IN LAW AWARD WINNER for Labor & Employment Category

Miles Scully Award Winner “Litigation”

Brandon Saxton Finalist

Gordon Rees Scully Mansukhani — Your 50 State Partner®

As the leading full-service, full-firm delivery platform, pillsbury delivers maximum value to our clients by combining the resources of a full-service national law firm with the local knowledge of a regional firm. Featuring more than 900 lawyers nationwide, we provide comprehensive litigation and transactional services to public and private companies ranging from startups to Fortune 500 corporations.

Founded in 1974, pillsbury is recognized among the fastest growing and largest law firms in the country. pillsbury is consistently ranked among the 25 largest law firms in the U.S. and the top 50 firms for diversity and female attorneys in the AmLaw 200.
NADIA BERMUDEZ
Shareholder
Klinedinst PC

Nadia Bermudez of Klinedinst PC is one of two winners in the labor and employment category. Bermudez has an established practice that focuses on counseling and defending clients in employment matters. Additionally, she has significant experience as a professional trainer in sexual harassment prevention and other employment topics. Bermudez was fluent in both English and Spanish, which made her adept at helping a wide variety of clients navigate the increasingly complex business environment in California. She was selected by Gov. Gavin Newsom to serve on the San Diego and Imperial County Regional Judicial Selection Advisory Committee in 2019, and she was appointed to serve as a lawyer representative by the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California and was then selected to serve as co-chair and lead the local delegation to the 9th Circuit Conference. Bermudez said after the awards program, “I think we all recognize what a special place San Diego is to practice,” Bermudez said after the awards program. “This is a warm and collegial crowd. I am happy to be among the award recipients tonight.”

WILLIAM WHELAN
Partner
Solomon Ward Seidenwurm & Smith LLP

William Whelan, partner with Solomon Ward Seidenwurm & Smith, LLP, is one of two winners in the labor and employment category. Whelan’s practice focuses on labor and employment issues, primarily on behalf of management. He has successfully represented medical groups, manufacturers, retailers, nonprofit employers, religious institutions, a school of law, and financial institutions in obtaining favorable litigation outcomes. He has successfully handled many wrongful termination, discrimination, wage and hour class actions, employee compensation cases, partnership disputes, contract cases, non-compete contract claims, trade secret cases, interference with contractual relations claims, and has shown his strength in negotiation and is a showcase example of leadership in his field.
Managing Risk and Negotiating Insurance

RISK... needs to be managed.

Managing Risk and Negotiating Insurance
Justine Phillips (Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton LLP).
Sara Neva (Procopio, Cory, Hargreaves & Savitch LLP).
Anne Wolverton (San Diego Symphony) and Dusty Wolverton (Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP).
Jennifer Chang (Hecht Goldberg Robinson Goldberg & Bagley LLP).
Dana Main (County of San Diego).
Paul Najar (Gafcon) and Tim Hutter (Allen Matkins).
Laura Buckley (Higgs Fletcher & Mack LLP). William Whelan (Solomon Ward Seidenwurm & Smith LLP).

Eshel Bar-Adon (Axos Financial, Inc. and Axos Bank). Jared Smith and John Phillips (Fish & Richardson).

Laura Buckley (Higgs Fletcher & Mack LLP). William Wheelan (Solomon Ward Seidenwurm & Smith LLP).
Nadia Bermudez (Klinedinst P.C.). Sara Neva (Procopio, Cory, Hargreaves & Savitch LLP).
Justine Phillips (Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton LLP).

CONGRATULATIONS FOR WINNING 2019 LEADERS IN LAW

Founder Jacob Sapochnick is a San Diego Immigration lawyer who holds an advanced master of law (LLM) in International law. He is an entrepreneur and a local Angel investor in numerous start ups. As a San Diego immigration lawyer, he has extensive experience in investment visas and advices local employers who are seeking foreign workers to add to their teams. He is a true advocate for immigrants and their employers, and is a showcase example of leadership in his field.

Contact us at info@h1b.biz or 619-819-9204

#LeadersInLaw2019 #SDBJEvents

Congratulations
2019 Winners & Finalists
See you next year!