



# CITATIONS

FEBRUARY - TWO THOUSAND TWENTY FOUR

## CITATIONS Managing Editor Profile: Kathleen Maheu

By *Christal Joy Porter*

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*Melissa Gray (sister) and Kat Maheu*

JOSHUA S. HOPSTONE

VALARIE GROSSMAN

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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Joshua Hopstone

The strength of any organization lies in the caliber of its leaders. The VCBA is no exception. Year after year, the Board of Directors serves as the backbone of the association, setting the tone for excellence and guiding the Bar toward stability and success. Bar leadership is not just about making rote decisions; it requires drive and commitment to inspire the membership to be involved.

In this month's President's Message, I am pleased to introduce the 17 members of the 2024 VCBA Board of Directors. As you will see, our organization is fortunate to benefit from a Board of Directors reflecting a diverse tapestry of personal and professional backgrounds. Each member brings a unique set of skills, experiences, and insights, contributing to a more robust and well-rounded leadership that enables us to better serve the needs of our attorney membership and the greater community at large.



**Benjamin Baumer** is an associate at Lowthorp Richards specializing in civil litigation. Ben is a Ventura native and graduate of the Ventura College of Law. He is pleased to join the VCBA Board of Directors this year as a member at large, as he continues to serve on the Barristers Board and Citations Editorial Committee.



**Rachel Coleman** is an experienced civil litigator with Siege Law. Rachel has immersed herself in the legal community for over a decade, having served on the VCBA Board of Directors since 2013 and as a past president of the Barristers and other organizations. The VCBA is fortunate to benefit from her continued service this year.

**Mickye Coyle** is among the most dedicated and longest-serving members of the Ventura County Bar Association. For over 25 years Mickye has served the Ventura community as a Senior Deputy in the Ventura County District Attorney's office in the Sexual Assault Unit. She is pleased to continue her service on the VCBA Board in 2024.



**Michael Crawford** was admitted to the bar in 2023 and is excited to join the VCBA Board of Directors this year. As a staff attorney with California Rural Legal Assistance in Oxnard

(CRLA), Michael works every day to help the most vulnerable in our community. Michael also serves as Treasurer on the Barristers Board.



**Ian L. Elsenheimer** is proud to join the VCBA Board of Directors in 2024 for the first time. Ian currently serves as President of the Ventura County Barristers and is an associate at Ferguson Case Orr Paterson LLP in Ventura, where his practice focuses on business and real estate transactions and intellectual property.



**Vanessa Frank** has been recognized as a valued pillar of the legal community in Ventura County, where she practices exclusively in the area of immigration law. Vanessa has served on the VCBA Board for many years and is a past recipient of the Ben E. Nordman award, Verna Rose Kagan Award for Public Service, and Holly G. Spevak Public Service award, among many other honors and recognitions.



**Brian C. Israel** is the Immediate Past President and an associate at Norman Dowler, where his practice focuses on estate planning and business transactions. The VCBA grew and improved tremendously under his stewardship in 2023, and the Board of Directors looks forward to his continued involvement and leadership in the future.



**Damon Jenkins** is a devoted public defender in the Ventura County Office of the Public Defender. Damon has served on the VCBA board for many years and concurrently serves as President of the Black Attorneys Association.

**Jasmine Khoshnou** is a Deputy Public Defender in the Ventura County Office of the Public Defender. Jasmine is proud to join the VCBA Board of Directors in 2024.



**Louis Kreuzer** has been practicing law in Ventura County for over thirty years, primarily in the area of employment litigation. The VCBA is fortunate to continue benefitting from his leadership and contributions to the Board of Directors this year.



**Lane J. Lopez** is pleased to rejoin the VCBA board in 2024. A partner at Ferguson Case Orr Paterson LLP, Lane's practice includes business and real estate transactions, trust and estate planning and litigation, as well as tax law for which he earned an LLM.



**Lauren Nicholson** is an experienced family law practitioner in Ventura. Lauren devotes herself every day to improving the lives of those in need in the legal community and greater Ventura County community. In addition to continuing on the VCBA Board, she served last year as President of the Women Lawyers of Ventura County and remains involved with many other organizations.



**Guillermo "Bert" Partida** is a partner at Slaughter Reagan & Cole LLP, and is renowned for his work in the area of business litigation and defense. Born and raised in Oxnard, Bert is devoted to improving his community through Rotary of Oxnard, Ventura County Legal Aid, and other organizations. Bert currently holds the position of President-Elect.



**Michael Pellegrini** is a civil litigator with Myers Widders Gibson Jones & Feingold LLP who previously worked for nearly a decade in the area of criminal defense. The VCBA Board is fortunate to have Michael's dynamic presence and experience starting this year.



**H. Frederick Siegenfeld** is the principal of Siege Law which maintains offices in Santa Barbara, Ventura and San Diego counties. His practice includes estate planning and probate, business transactions, personal injury, family law, and criminal defense.



**Kristine A. Tijam** is an associate at Procter, Shyer & Winter in Camarillo, where her practice is focused on complex civil litigation and insurance defense. Kristine has served on the VCBA Board for several years, and is proud to join

*continued on page 5*

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CITATIONS is published monthly by the Ventura County Bar Association. The articles in CITATIONS are the views of the authors, and should not be construed as legal advice. Every situation is different. Consult a lawyer if you need legal advice.

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the Executive Board this year as Secretary-Treasurer, slating her to serve as President in 2026. Kristine additionally serves as President of the Ventura County Asian American Bar Association (VCAABA) and is a past President of the Barristers.



**Roslynn Wilfert** is a Deputy District Attorney in Ventura. Prior to serving her community as a prosecutor, Roslynn was in private practice specializing in criminal law. She currently serves on the board of Women Lawyers of Ventura County, and is excited to join the VCBA board in 2024.

My heartfelt appreciation goes to each and every member of the board who have chosen to devote their time and energy toward improving the Ventura County Bar Association this year.



**Joshua S. Hopstone** is a partner at Ferguson Case Orr Paterson LLP. His practice focuses on business and real estate litigation, trust/probate litigation, and appeals. He can be reached at [jbopstone@fcoplau.com](mailto:jbopstone@fcoplau.com) or (805) 659-6800.



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# CITATIONS Managing Editor Profile: Kathleen Maheu

By Christal Joy Porter

**Kathleen (“Kat”) Maheu** has been serving as the Managing Editor for the Ventura County Bar Association’s CITATIONS magazine since July 2023. Maheu stepped into the role previously held by **Wendy Lascher**, who had been at the helm of CITATIONS for many years, most recently co-editing with **Cari Ann Potts**. Lascher has made (and continues to make) lasting and indelible contributions to our local legal community, and beyond as a well-known appellate attorney. Maheu knows she has “big shoes to fill” and hopes her contributions to CITATIONS and VCBA will live up to Lascher’s legacy.

## Career Background

Maheu received her associate degree in journalism from Los Angeles Valley College. At LAVC, Maheu was involved in every aspect of the campus newspaper, *The Valley Star*, from a column writer to Editor in chief, and every position in between. Maheu found time to devote to her journalism studies and newspaper duties while also playing on LAVC’s intercollegiate women’s softball team for two years. Maheu successfully juggled both of her passions until her last semester before graduation. Her love of softball and the wear and tear it caused on her shoulder forced her to turn down a post degree offer with the Los Angeles Daily News sports department. Maheu had to undergo an intensive surgical procedure on her right shoulder to repair tendon and tissue damage from her rigorous play as a first baseman.

After her shoulder surgery recovery, Maheu transferred to California State University, Northridge and found herself working with DHL, a global logistics and shipping company, where she started as a part time pickup/delivery driver while attending her junior year at CSUN. She soon found herself rising in the ranks until she ultimately held a position as a major account executive in DHL’s sales division, a promotion that came while she was going to law school. Maheu moved to Ventura in 1997 as part of a promotion/transfer at DHL. During her time climbing the ranks at DHL, Maheu managed to complete her bachelor’s degree from CSUN in Political Science, taking night classes for many years. (Maheu’s original major was Biology - Pre

Med, but after observing the same shoulder surgery she had undergone, Maheu realized the surgeon path was not for her.)

After achieving success with DHL, Maheu wanted more of an intellectual challenge in her work, so she enrolled at Ventura College of Law and attended the night program while she still worked at DHL. During her studies at VCL, Maheu was a student in several of **Mark Pachowicz’s** criminal law classes and subsequently worked as a law clerk for his private practice while she awaited bar results in 2008. Upon passing the bar exam, Pachowicz hired Maheu full-time as an associate attorney with the understanding she would work primarily in family law. From the time she was licensed until August 2023, Maheu worked for Pachowicz’ firm, The Law Offices of Mark Pachowicz, which became Pachowicz | Goldenring following a 2020 merger.

Throughout her career, Maheu has concentrated her practice in family law while also providing litigation support in criminal defense, civil litigation, federal civil rights actions, and a variety of other sub-practice areas for the firm. In August 2023, Maheu embarked on a new phase of her career, accepting a position with the Ventura County Superior Court as Court Research Attorney. Maheu utilizes her extensive civil litigation background and passion for learning to assist judicial officers.

## Q & A

**-What are some notable cases that you worked on during your time as a civil litigator?**

There are a number of memorable cases, but one that comes to mind is *Willis v Vasquez, et al.* This was a civil rights lawsuit tried in the U.S. District Court of California, Central Division. I was able to play a major role in the pretrial work and at trial I was the evidence technician, responsible for marshalling and displaying the exhibits to everyone in the courtroom. The case is notable because it was the first case where a jury awarded punitive damages against the Los Angeles County Sheriff, Lee Baca. The case centered around the physical abuse and unjust beating of an inmate by Los Angeles Sheriff Department correctional officers.

**What do you appreciate about your new position as Legal Research Attorney with the Ventura Superior Court?**

I enjoy the opportunity to review matters from a neutral standpoint and assess both sides of the matter without the emotional drama of litigation. I also appreciate learning and understanding the law that centers around a case and using my litigation background to understand the nuances of the many different types of cases I see, from lemon law cases to medical malpractice, to business disputes. My job is to help consolidate information/facts/issues for the judges. I have experienced that our Ventura Superior Court judges are earnestly committed to doing right by the parties that appear before the Court.

**What are your duties as Managing Editor of Citations?**

As managing editor, I act as the “last filter” for CITATIONS. I edit and perform the final review of articles and content in the magazine. I also chair the monthly CITATIONS Editorial Board meetings and work closely with the VCBA office to plan upcoming articles and focal points for CITATIONS.

**What are your thoughts about the current state of Citations and your hopes for the future of the magazine?**

I appreciate that CITATIONS is our “local” magazine where the Ventura County legal community can stay connected and informed about local updates, VCBA subgroup events, and get to know colleagues and judicial officers. Ventura County is sometimes thought of to be a “small town” and CITATIONS plays an integral part in keeping everyone in the Ventura legal community connected.

I am hopeful that the magazine can move towards including more legal content and discussion of interesting appellate level cases that impact our legal community. I also want to be responsive to what the readers want to read, so I would like to pose the question: *What would you like to see in CITATIONS?* All input and feedback is welcome. Please feel free to email me at [Maheu\\_Citations@protonmail.com](mailto:Maheu_Citations@protonmail.com).

**Interesting/Fun Facts**

-Maheu passed the CA bar exam on her first try using only a self – study bar prep program.

-Maheu sang and played guitar and bass in the all-female bluegrass/country group One Note Suzie, a Ventura/Santa Barbara area band, about 15 years ago. In an alternate universe, Maheu would have loved to be a country music star – a la “The Chicks.”

-Maheu is happily married.

-Maheu spends her free time playing music (but not nearly enough!), and in her garage woodworking. Her current project is making two matching nightstands. Her garage is equipped with a dust collection system and a variety of cool woodworking machines and tools.

Maheu may have missed her opportunity to work for the Daily News, but is very grateful to now have the opportunity to work with CITATIONS and support the Ventura legal community.



*Christal Joy Porter is a trust and estates litigation Associate at Rodnunsky & Associates. She can be reached at (424)416-4109.*

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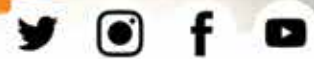
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## BARRISTERS' CORNER

Have you ever wondered if you could be a Judge? Have you ever considered the career move but didn't know where to begin? Ventura County will soon have many open positions in the judiciary, and Governor Gavin Newsom's office will eventually be looking to fill these spots. There has never been a more exciting time to apply for this rewarding career. But do you understand the application process?

If you think a career as a judge may be your future, or if you would just like to learn more about the application process, I invite you to attend the upcoming virtual workshop, "The Bench is Calling... Will YOU Heed to the Call?" The program is a workshop from the Tri-Counties Judicial Mentor Program.

The Tri-Counties Judicial Mentorship Program is a collaboration between the executive and judicial branches of the State of California. The program was formed in 2021 with the goal of recruiting and developing a highly qualified judicial applicant pool that reflects California's rich diversity. A diverse judicial applicant pool includes a diverse set of practice areas and backgrounds, as well as diverse ethnicities, sexual orientations, and nationalities.

The Judicial Mentorship Program is looking to increase awareness of the judicial needs in Ventura, Santa Barbara, and San Luis Obispo Counties while providing support to prospective candidates. The program matches those who are interested in applying to become a judge with current judges who can mentor them through the application process. Judges are available to serve as mentors.

The program's panel includes: Luis Cespedes, Governor Gavin Newsom's Judicial Appointments Secretary; the **Honorable Kevin G. De Noce**, Presiding Judge for Ventura Superior Court; the Honorable **Marine Dermadzhyan** and the Honorable **Michele M. Castillo** will be moderating the event.

This program will be presented live over zoom on February 21st from 12:15-1:15pm and requires advanced registration. Once you register for the event, you will be sent the zoom link to attend on February 21st. Please RSVP to [JudicialMentors@ventura.courts.ca.gov](mailto:JudicialMentors@ventura.courts.ca.gov) to attend.



**Valarie Grossman** is an attorney with Saltzman & Johnson Law Corporation. She specializes in ERISA Compliance and Litigation, and is a Member of the Barristers Board of Directors.

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## HAVE YOU HEARD



Governor Newsom has named **Dana Caudill** to the Ventura County Superior Court bench. Caudill earned a Juris Doctor degree from the University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law. She fills the vacancy created by the retirement of **Judge Manuel Covarrubias**.



VCBA welcomes **Claire Highland** as the new bar leader for the VC SOGI section. The reigns have been handed over from **Mickye Coyle**. Claire is a criminal defense attorney in Oxnard. She is a graduate of Western Washington University and Seattle University School of Law. She is admitted to both Washington State and California Bar Associations. Claire began her career as a public defender in Washington State, quickly rising through the ranks to the felony division.



The judges of the Ventura Superior Court have announced the selection of **Diana Weiss Aizman** as the Court's newest commissioner. She fills the vacancy created by

**Commissioner Paul W. Feldman** who was appointed to a judgeship in 2023. Aizman's official start date will be Tuesday, February 20, 2024, and she will be assigned to the Criminal Division and hear traffic matters in Courtroom 10. Aizman's more than 16 years of experience as an attorney has been exclusive to criminal law matters. As a senior law clerk, she worked in the Auto Insurance Fraud Division of the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office from 2007 to 2008. As a deputy city attorney for the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office from 2008 to 2012.

After 31 years of service in the Public Defender's Office, **Randolph Tucker** has retired. Farewell Randy – VCBA wishes you the best in your retirement. Thank you for all you have done as a public servant and for the community.



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