



CITATIONS

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CONSUMER PROTECTION IS DEAD. LONG LIVE CONSUMER PROTECTION!

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Guillermo "Bert" Partida

Are You Ready for the Summer?

For me, summertime was for watching movies, which I enjoyed probably too much, as I make many obscure movie references. (Hint: the title of this article is in reference to a movie.) An unofficial poll of favorite law movies in my office yielded the following:

1. *My Cousin Vinny* – Top pick, probably because of the hidden reference to the *Palsgraf* case or the judge played by the same actor as Herman Munster.

2. *Legally Blonde* – Go Elle!

3. *Lincoln Lawyer* – All right, all right, all right.

4. *12 Angry Men* – The unreliability of eyewitness testimony.

5. *Philadelphia* – Who doesn't love Tom Hanks, Denzel Washington, The Boss?

6. *Paper Chase* – Now it's chasing an electronic search.

7. *A Few Good Men* – You can't handle the truth!

8. *Michael Clayton* – The truth can be adjusted.

A few honorable mentions should be given to *Erin Brockovich*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *A Time to Kill*, and *The Firm*. Would love to hear about your favorite law movie at the following link - <https://forms.gle/2NPsUzQdSH3sywbz6>

The Rule of Law Continues

On May 1, 1958, President Dwight Eisenhower introduced Law Day in the United States as the official day of reflection on the role of law in the foundations of our country and the importance of the legal system to our society. On May 9th, our California State Bar issued a statement reminding us of fundamental principles of the legal profession. It reaffirms, "that all lawyers must be permitted to exercise their professional judgment and ethical duties without fear of reprisal." It is not a partisan position, but rather, it is foundational to the practice of law and the preservation of the rule of law.

VCBA continues its Community Outreach



Mock Interview Participants

The VCBA attended the Oxnard Union High School Law Academy's mock interview program for seniors, along with members of the Ventura County Public Defender's office and Human Resources office. The program encourages students to choose a career in public service and provides an opportunity for mock interviews, allowing students to engage in selling their achievements with confidence, making eye contact, and speaking with hiring professionals.

Our next community outreach program will take place on June 21st, 2025, at

Plaza Park in Oxnard where the Black Lawyers section of VCBA will be holding an event for Juneteenth.

Hope you have a great summer!



Guillermo "Bert" Partida practices law at Slaughter, Reagan & Cole, LLP in the areas of Personal Injury Defense, Premises Liability, and Habitability Defense.




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HAVE YOU HEARD?

Commissioner Hubner Elevated to Judge



Judge Carol L. Hubner officially began her term on May 12, 2025, as Ventura County Superior Court's newest Judge, after having been appointed by Governor Gavin Newsom on May 7, 2025. Hubner fills the vacancy created by the retirement of **Judge Nancy Ayers**.



Brian Sottile Named as Ventura's Newest Commissioner

Brian Sottile, of the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office, has been named as the Ventura County Superior Court's newest Commissioner. He is set to replace newly elevated Judge Hubner in Department 34.

Commissioner Nemerson to Hear Unlawful Detainer Cases Effective June 2, 2025

Beginning June 2, 2025, Unlawful Detainer cases, including Ex Parte hearings, will be heard in Department 10 at 1:30 p.m. by **Commissioner Matthew Nemerson**. The Unlawful Detainer calendar will be heard on Mondays (or Tuesday following a Monday court holiday).

Unlawful Detainer Ex Parte hearings, only, will also be heard in Courtroom 40 at 8:30 a.m. on Tuesdays through Fridays, beginning June 3, 2025. Reservations must be made for Ex Parte hearings by contacting the judicial secretary.

VCTLA Honors Judge Anthony Sabo as 2024 Judge of the Year



The Ventura County Trial Lawyers Association (VCTLA) have named **Judge Anthony J. Sabo** as Judge of the Year for 2024. The honor was bestowed at the Association's annual Judges' Night dinner on April 22, 2025, at the Courtyard Marriott in Oxnard.

Sabo was elected as a Ventura Superior Court judge in June 2018 to fill the vacancy created by the retirement of **Judge Brian Back**. On October 11, 2018, Governor Edmund Brown, Jr., appointed Judge-elect Sabo to an interim judgeship at the Court, which allowed Sabo to immediately perform his judicial duties.

Prior to Sabo's appointment, he served as a Commissioner with the Ventura Superior Court beginning in May 2014, presiding over felony and misdemeanor trials and sentencings, as well as civil, probate and family law cases. Currently assigned to criminal trial Courtroom 46, Sabo assumed the role of Supervising Judge of the Criminal Division on April 28, 2025. Prior to his selection as Commissioner, Sabo served as a Senior Deputy District Attorney

at the Ventura County District Attorney's Office from 2008 to 2014, and as a Deputy Prosecutor in the Office of the Dearborn and Ohio County Prosecutor from 1997 to 2008. Simultaneously, he was the sole practitioner of his own law office from 1995 to 2008 representing clients in family, probate, and property disputes, as well as representing governmental agencies and corporations. Sabo earned his Juris Doctor degree from the University of North Dakota School of Law and his Bachelor of Arts degree from Indiana University, Bloomington.

Also honored at the event were retired Ventura Superior Court judges, **Hon. Patricia M. Murphy** and **Hon. Henry J. Walsh**, who were selected as VCTLA's Portrait Honorees for 2024. Formal portraits of Murphy and Walsh were unveiled and presented to the Court during the ceremony.



Panda Kroll Visits Japan

CITATIONS Editorial Board member **Panda Kroll** travelled to Japan last month to visit her son and represent the Camarillo chapter of Rotary International at the Tokyo Rotary Club.

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A DEBT OF GRATITUDE TO DEPUTY JEFF STUTEVILLE

By Sandra D. Rubio, Court Tour Program Administrator

It takes a village for the Court Tour Program to run successfully, which involves the court administration, judges, commissioners, sheriff's department, volunteer docents, and VCBA. Since 1977, the program has offered tours to various groups and students from all walks of life. This 2024-2025 school year we had students from Project LEAD, which various deputy district attorneys served as mentors, a girl scout troop, homeschool programs, adult transition program, and the many elementary, middle, and high school levels which participated. This collective season provided the three hour and thirty-minute educational tour to 1,118 people who learned about our judicial system at the Ventura courthouse. Participants observed trials in progress, spoke with judges, commissioners, attorneys, or other court personnel and ended with a mock trial skit activity performed in an actual courtroom during the lunch hour.



As the season came to an end in May, the docents and I would like to particularly extend a heartfelt thank you to **Deputy Stuteville**.

Before we get to that, according to the Thousand Oaks Acorn which wrote about his timely prevention of a teen suicide in 2014, Stuteville grew up in Camarillo and attended Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Prescott, Arizona. He was a junior at the flight school when the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks happened, and jobs for pilots were scarce after he graduated. He worked at an airport and a flight school, where some of his students were police officers, before joining the Ventura County Sheriff's Office. In addition to having patrolled Thousand Oaks, he mentored new deputies and taught drill formation classes.

Diane White, lead docent, wrote, "Jeff is such an asset to the Court Tour Program. He volunteers his lunch breaks for the hour-long mock trial. During that time, he assists the docents with the courtroom set

up, assists the students with the mechanics of their roles in the mock trial, spends time talking to them about the court system, his job as a bailiff, his uniform, law enforcement weapons, and the Sheriff's Department. Without being asked, Bailiff Stuteville researched information about our Ventura County courts and judges which he presents to the students. Students ask lots of questions because Stuteville isn't intimidating, just a sheriff with a very nice, friendly demeanor. We docents are so fortunate to have Bailiff Stuteville present during the mock trial. Hopefully, his interaction with the students will inspire them to consider a career as a sheriff and see the humane side of law enforcement."

Docent Karen Blackwell said, "Jeff has been a valuable addition to our docent team. He was initially recruited to just sit in to protect the courtroom where the students conduct a mock trial, but he has developed his role to be so much more. The students love his stories and have learned so much about our judicial system from him."

Docent Barbara Ferguson shared, "Jeff is very nice. He really enjoys working with the kids and helping with the mock trial. The kids enjoy talking to him and we enjoy working with him."

Deputy Stuteville is assigned to courtroom 40. Here is what **Judge Mark Borrell** had to say about his wonderful bailiff. "I am very fortunate to have Deputy Jeff Stuteville as my bailiff. Quick with a smile and a kind word, Deputy Stuteville makes everyone in Department 40 feel welcome. He brings a positive, helpful attitude to the job that is contagious. He's a great guy, a devoted father, a computer whiz, and (I understand) a really good drone pilot. Well done Jeff; you make us all proud."

Thank you also to **Captain Kenneth Truitt**, **Sergeant Matthew Theobald** and the Ventura County Sheriff's Office for your ongoing cooperation.

Sandra Rubio is the Court Tour Program Administrator, and also VCBA's Executive Director.

CONSUMER PROTECTION IS DEAD. LONG LIVE CONSUMER PROTECTION!

By Sparky Abraham

With the federal consumer finance cop off the beat, it's time for states and private parties to pick up the slack.

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, the first federal financial regulator to have protection of regular people as its mission, is at the end of the line. After returning more than \$19.7 billion to 195 million Americans (along with an additional \$5 billion in civil monetary penalties), and weathering round after round of constitutional challenges by the industries it regulates, the CFPB has been effectively killed.

The CFPB was created in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis. Prior to its creation in 2011, bank regulators were primarily concerned with the safety and soundness of the banks they regulated. That means they were attentive to whether banks were following consumer protection rules, but only because failure to do so might threaten *the banks*, not out of any concern for their customers.

The CFPB flipped that dynamic. Its mission, right there in the name, is the protection of American consumers. In addition to authority to enforce and regulate under various existing consumer protection laws (Equal Credit Opportunity Act, Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, Fair Credit Reporting Act, Truth in Lending Act, Real Estate Settlement Procedures Act, Electronic Funds Transfer Act, to name a few), the CFPB also has authority to put a stop to any unfair, deceptive, or abusive act or practice by a covered person, as broadly defined in its organic statute, the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act.

In its short 14 years of life, the CFPB has brought hundreds of enforcement actions, has promulgated regulations across consumer finance ranging from mortgages to medical debt, and has poured vastly underappreciated resources into on-site supervision of financial services companies to detect and correct violations before they become widespread.

In these past few months, all of that work has ground to a halt. After the departure of prior director Rohit Chopra, employees were told to stop all work, all probationary employees were fired (then reinstated by a federal judge), and then approximately 1,500 of the approximately 1,700 remaining

employees were fired (then reinstated by the same federal judge). Those reinstatements are now on appeal. As of now, although CFPB employees still have their jobs, their work has largely ceased. The work that has not ceased is the work of unwinding their previous efforts, including dismissing enforcement actions with prejudice, rescinding previous positions, and agreeing with opposing parties that prior CFPB regulations were not lawfully promulgated. For a scant decade and a half, American consumers had a cop on the beat. Now, it might seem that lawlessness reigns.

But lawlessness does not reign. The laws themselves are still on the books. It is still unlawful for providers of financial goods and services to engage in unfair, deceptive, or abusive acts and practices. The alphabet soup of consumer protection statutes—many going back to the 1970s—are still in effect, and most provide for fee shifting. Most of the CFPB's regulations are still in place. All these provisions can be enforced by state Attorneys General, and many can be enforced by private parties as well.

They can, and indeed they must be enforced. Consumer protections are never more important than in times of economic instability. Since a significant dip in 2021, credit card debt has sharply risen and is at its all-time highest level. Interest rates are up, making necessary aspects of life more expensive and more treacherous. That means credit reports carry more weight than ever, and will make the difference for many people when it comes to having transportation (or not), and thus between having a job (or not). Add that to the fact that scams have propagated exponentially in the past few years, highlighting the importance of protections against unauthorized transactions on our debit and credit cards.

All that is to say, as we enter uncharted macroeconomic territory, our financial lives will become more precarious, making legal violations somewhat more likely and the resulting harms much more severe.

Many state Attorneys General have expressed willingness to step in and fill the void left by the CFPB. The private bar, too, is energized. This past week the National Association of Consumer Advocates held its annual spring training, focusing this year on solar fraud, payment fraud, credit reporting,

and auto issues. I personally hope that when the dedicated attorneys at the CFPB are eventually scattered to the wind, we will see those attorneys bloom in private consumer protection practices and legal services organizations. There are already signs that this will happen.

As much as I love a target-rich environment for my own practice, and as much as I look forward to my former colleagues from the CFPB working alongside me in private practice, this is all cold comfort. There is simply no way a subset of states and a relatively small consumer protection bar can fill the gap left by the CFPB.

And even if we could, I expect the resulting consumer financial world will still be far less functional. With one overarching federal body setting interpretation of consumer protection laws in the rapidly-evolving financial industry, even the banks themselves could rely on a relatively high level of consistency. While they may not have always liked the CFPB's rules, at least they knew which rules to play by. Without the CFPB's authority, I worry financial services will find itself subject to nearly as many different rules and interpretations as there are Attorneys General and judges. The result, I fear, will be a good deal of chaos and inconsistency, and a lot of hard-to-predict costs that will ultimately harm both financial services companies *and* their customers.

Regardless of federal happenings, we in the consumer bar will still do our best to keep our clients and communities protected, come what may. I hope more local attorneys will join in.

Disclaimer: the author worked as an intern, an Honors Attorney, and a Staff Attorney in the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau Office of Enforcement in 2013 and from 2016 to 2018.



Sparky Abraham
founded Jubilee Legal in 2022 to help people facing debt problems. Since graduating from Yale Law School, where he led the Mortgage Foreclosure Litigation Clinic, Sparky has helped hundreds of people with creditor harassment, foreclosure, student debt, credit reporting issues, and discriminatory lending. www.jubilee.legal

FATHER'S DAY REFLECTIONS: LOCAL LAWYERS SHARE TOP GIFTS, FROM HOMEMADE CRAFTS TO FAMILY ADVENTURES

By Christal Joy Porter

The first Father's Day was celebrated in Spokane, Washington, on June 19, 1910. Credit for the holiday is given to Sonora Smart Dodd of Spokane, whose father, a Civil War veteran, raised her and her five siblings after their mother died in childbirth. The first Father's Day was celebrated in June, the month of the birthday of Sonora Dodd's father. In 1924 President Calvin Coolidge gave his support to the observance, and in 1966, President Lyndon B. Johnson issued a proclamation that recognized the day. It became a national holiday in 1972, when President Richard Nixon signed legislation designating the third Sunday of June as Father's Day, about 58 years after President Woodrow Wilson made Mother's Day an official holiday in 1914.

While it took 58 years to gain recognition as a national holiday, the impact of fathers, and their influence on their children's lives is just as important as a mother's. It can be hard to know how to honor a father figure in your life or what gift they may enjoy. There are only so many Father's Day ties you can give. We asked a handful of local attorneys who also hold the title of being a father to give some insight into the best Father's Day gift. They said:

My best Father's Day gift I have received is homemade arts and/or crafts from the children, and my idea of a great Father's Day gift is a 750 ml bottle of my favorite rye whiskey.

Benjamin Baumer - Lowthorp Richards, LLP

Best Father's Day present – it sounds corny but being a father is truly a gift. I enjoy being a friend, teacher, chef, coach, and everything else for our kids. Plus, being a father gives me leeway for dad jokes and showing cute pictures to friends and coworkers. In more material terms, the best gift I received was a Nike tech tracksuit.

When I lived in Germany, I really loved the way they celebrated Father's Day, with lots of parades, walking, hiking and being outside with friends, family, and beer. It was more of a celebration of men. I recognize men get enough attention and celebration, perhaps unrightfully so. On the other hand,

the most masculine thing to me is to be a good father, and all good parents should be celebrated.

Damon Jenkins - Senior Deputy Public Defender

My idea for the best Father's Day gift would be to have a little free time in the morning to play basketball and then to be able to come home to high-quality meats for me to barbecue for my kids and my family. If the Lakers were in the NBA Finals and decided to clinch a championship on Father's Day, I wouldn't be mad about that either.

Brian C. Israel - Lowthorp Richards, LLP

Although I am a busy trial litigator, I always made time for my two sons. Last Father's Day, I received a Father's Day card from my youngest (he is 41). In the card, he wrote: "Thank you for teaching me a work ethic but always the importance to always show up for your family from large events to a regular soccer match. You are the best role model and I strive to do the same for my kids"

Laurence R. Goldman - Negley Law

The best Father's Day gifts I have received and given have been experiences, not things. My family traditionally goes on a bike ride with me for Father's Day (although this year I'm not holding out) and the best gift I've given to my dad has been sailing and flyfishing adventures.

Erik Feingold, Partner - Myers, Widders, Gibson, Jones & Feingold

The best Father's Day gift was when I took my father to Nepal to climb to Everest Base Camp after he recovered from a heart attack and his first bout with cancer. Hoping to take our five boys back to Nepal within the next year.

My idea for the best Father's Day gift is spending quality time with our family together doing activities like backpacking, mountain biking, hiking, or surfing. The

older I get the more I realize that time is the most valuable commodity and sharing that together as a family is priceless.

John J. Negley, Jr. – Negley Law

Whether big or small, expensive or creative, we hope that you find inspiration to celebrate the father figures in your life in a way that they would enjoy, whether that be for Father's Day or some other time this year.

Thank you to all of the attorney dads and men who have made a commitment to be present in their children's lives or a father figure in others' lives while also pursuing excellence in the legal profession. Your sacrifices are more valuable than you know. CITATIONS wishes a Happy Father's Day to all dads in the Ventura County community!



Christal Joy Porter, a graduate of Pepperdine University School of Law, is an attorney with Rodninsky & Associates, practicing in the areas of trust and estate litigation and estate planning. She can be reached at the office at (818) 737-1090.

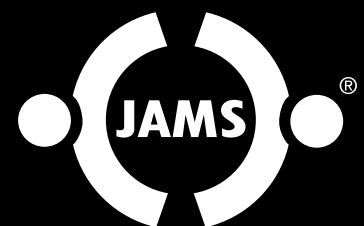


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BAR EXAM DEBACLE: LOCAL LAW GRADUATES SPEAK OUT

By Nicole Coulter

The February 2025 California Bar Exam was marred by technical failures, mismanagement, and poor communication, making it one of the most chaotic in State Bar history. A rushed rollout of a new cost-cutting exam platform led to crashes, unresponsive proctors, missing functionality, and unfamiliar question formats, leaving local examinees frustrated and unprepared.

Early Warnings Ignored

Issues surfaced as early as November when students taking a mock exam encountered severe technical glitches—many of the same that later disrupted the February exam. A January practice test exposed further problems, prompting the Bar to offer full refunds to examinees who withdrew two weeks before the test. However, this last-minute offer failed to compensate for the months of studying and financial sacrifices test-takers had already made.

“I felt completely betrayed,” said one Santa Barbara College of Law graduate who withdrew after experiencing severe disruptions during the mock exam and practice test. She described technical failures, confusing interruptions from a remote proctor, and an interface that was difficult to navigate. She now plans to take the July exam, hoping the problems will be resolved.

A Ventura College of Law student faced similar issues. After taking the required mock exam, she received an email stating she had not completed it, forcing her to spend hours sorting out inconsistencies with the Bar. Unwilling to risk further complications, she opted for the refund and plans to retake the exam in July.

Registration Nightmares

Applicants struggled to select a test site using Meazure Learning’s platform, with some assigned to locations hours away. The State Bar later admitted to scheduling failures and inconsistencies with Meazure Learning but offered solutions too late for many.

Becky Hoffman, a 2025 graduate of Santa Barbara College of Law, encountered an error when attempting to select a test site—her zip code wasn’t recognized. Meazure

Learning referred her to the Bar, but the phone number they provided led to an automated message—in French. Forced to take the exam at the Ontario Convention Center, a five-hour drive away, she later learned that a closer site had been added, but by then, she had already booked a non-refundable hotel.

Exam Day Chaos

On exam day, Hoffman’s test began more than an hour late due to platform failures. The copy-and-paste function was disabled, forcing students to manually retype legal text during the Performance Test.

On the second day, the platform crashed mid-test, causing panic as the timer continued running on the multiple-choice section. Everyone was forced to reboot. With no on-site tech support, examinees were left scrambling while proctors stood by, unsure of what to do.

“People around me were yelling, demanding answers, and some were crying,” Hoffman said. After three months of studying, writing over 50 essays, and answering more than 1,600 multiple-choice questions, she felt her efforts were undermined by the technical failures.

Ivan Hernandez, a Thomas Jefferson School of Law graduate and paralegal at Seige Law in Oxnard, noted grammatical errors in multiple-choice questions, making some difficult to understand. Like Hoffman, he also lost connectivity mid-exam on the second day, preventing him from saving answers for several minutes, which threw off his focus. Further, he added that “The copy-and-paste function not working made the entire process more time-consuming than necessary—I had to manually rewrite everything instead of quickly transferring key details.”

Law School Deans Sounded the Alarm

Law school deans had warned against implementing multiple changes too quickly, including replacing the National Conference of Bar Examiner’s Multistate Bar Exam (MBE) with an untested system. In an April 2024 letter, deans from California-accredited law schools, including Jackie Gardina of The Colleges of Law, cautioned that a six-month

transition was far too short—especially compared to the three years the NCBE took to develop its NextGen exam.

The deans were also concerned about the State Bar’s reliance on an untested technology platform, intended to cut costs by reducing the need for in-person test sites. The November 2024 mock exam confirmed their fears, revealing major problems such as crashes, submission failures, and untrained remote proctors. Despite these red flags, the State Bar moved forward. Following the February exam disaster, public backlash was swift, culminating in two hours of complaints from examinees at a Board of Trustees meeting.

Calls for Action

With the California Supreme Court weighing a return to traditional in-person methods no matter the cost, California-accredited law school deans demanded urgent corrective action. In a letter dated March 3, 2025, the deans formally petitioned the California Supreme Court to implement provisional licensure for adversely affected examinees and an immediate return to the NCBE-administered MBE.

Hoffman and others argue that offering a free retake in July is inadequate, as it fails to address financial hardships, professional setbacks, and the emotional toll on examinees—especially those with families and full-time jobs.

“The State Bar must take real accountability,” Hoffman said. She and others are advocating for provisional licensure, weighted-score adjustments to account for technical failures, or even eliminating the Performance Test altogether to compensate for the chaos.


For now, test-takers await the State Bar’s response, hoping for meaningful remedies.

Update: This article originally appeared in the April issue of Santa Barbara Lawyer and is reprinted with permission. On May 5, the California State Bar announced a 55.9% pass rate for the February 2025 exam, the highest in six decades. The record-setting outcome followed a chaotic exam administration marked by the failed launch of the Bar’s proprietary testing platform, which

caused widespread confusion and technical disruptions. In response, the California Supreme Court intervened on May 2, approving retroactive score adjustments and directing the Bar to abandon its hybrid model. The Court ordered a return to the prior exam provider and full reinstatement of the MBE.

Both test-takers profiled—Becky Hoffman and Ivan Hernandez—ultimately passed. Hoffman criticized the last-minute substitution of NCBE materials, arguing that it undermined examinees' preparation, which depends on "muscle memory around recognizing fact patterns, hypos, and writing style." She described the Bar's 25 practice questions as riddled with "errors, typos, and wrong answers," and said the redlined study materials released just two weeks before the exam only reinforced concerns that the replacement questions fell short of NCBE standards.

Nicole Coulter is a J.D. candidate at Santa Barbara College of Law (The Colleges of Law) and a paralegal at Seige Law, P.C.



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J. ROGER MYERS SCHOLARSHIP AWARDED TO FERNANDO TRUJILLO: FIRST-GENERATION LAW STUDENT AND COMMUNITY ADVOCATE TO SERVE VENTURA COUNTY

By Rachel Coleman



The J. Roger Myers Scholarship Fund is proud to announce **Fernando Trujillo** is the recipient of the 2024-2025 scholarship. Trujillo is a second-year law student at the University of the Pacific McGeorge School of Law in Sacramento (McGeorge). He grew up in both Fillmore and Santa Paula, graduating from Santa Paula High School in 2017. In 2022, he obtained a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology at California State University at Chico. After graduating from Chico State, in addition to attending McGeorge, he became a California Climate Action Corps Fellow. He organized projects to enhance climate resilience and emergency preparedness across Butte County. This included organizing the Martin Luther King "Day of Service" for two consecutive years at the South Chico Community Assistance Center. This initiative provided critical support to the unhoused community by assembling and distributing winter kits

with essential items. He helped maintain edible community gardens, led community workshops, and assisted in large-scale events like the "Beat the Heat" Festival which focused on sustainability, community engagement, and innovative problem-solving.

Since January 2025, he has worked at the California Victims Research Center at McGeorge as a law clerk where he conducts research and drafts memoranda on victims' rights, state restitution laws and due process issues to support attorney guidance and public education materials. He also assists with the development of victim-focused publications and collaborates with staff attorneys and outreach teams by participating in legal information referral services and community resource events. This opportunity is providing him with the knowledge and resources he will need to return to Ventura County to provide legal services to the local community after receiving his Juris Doctor (2027) and passing the bar exam.

As a first-generation college graduate and the son of Mexican immigrants, he understands the struggles faced by underserved populations in the community, particularly immigrants and low-income families. He plans to use his legal education to address these disparities and build stronger, more equitable systems. He says, "One of my primary focuses will be providing pro bono legal services to undocumented immigrants, particularly Spanish-speaking individuals." Growing up in Ventura County gave Trujillo a unique insight into the needs of the local community as he "witnessed the barriers faced by immigrants navigating complex legal processes with limited resources."

When Trujillo returns to Ventura County as a licensed attorney, he intends to provide pro bono legal services to the local community ensuring that "language barriers or financial status is not an obstacle to justice." He will be recognized as the recipient of the J. Roger Myers Scholarship at the Ventura County Bar Association's Annual Installation and Awards Dinner on Saturday, November 15, 2025, to be held at the Four Points Sheraton in Ventura Harbor.

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MEMBER SPOTLIGHTS:

Katie Becker: A Passion for Law, Family, and Community Service



Ventura County native **Katie Becker** has been a dedicated member of the VCBA since 2007 and a California State Bar member since 2011. She is a founding partner at Becker & Dehesa, LLP, focusing on estate planning, probate, trusts, and conservatorships.

Becker's journey to law wasn't straightforward. She always loved reading and writing, and devoured John Grisham novels as a teen. But early experiences in high-pressure law firms almost made her abandon the idea of becoming a lawyer. Working as a legal assistant in the litigation department of a mortgage company showed her just how stressed and unhappy some lawyers could be. But earning a paralegal certificate and then a job as a paralegal under Ben Schuck while attending law school shifted her perspective. She found

her calling in trusts and estates, work she still finds fulfilling today.

Becker is deeply engaged with the legal community. She's co-chair of the Estate Planning and Probate Board and a board member of the Women Lawyers of Ventura County. She previously served as president of the Women Lawyers, Barristers, and Animal Law sections, and as a former board member of both the VCBA and the California Young Lawyers Association.

Outside the office, Becker lives in Camarillo with her husband, Rick, and their two children, Declan (9) and Mara (6). She also shares her home with Millie, a beloved black lab mix. Family is central to everything she does. Her son has autism, ADHD, and epilepsy. These experiences have shaped her compassion and deepened her work in conservatorships and special needs law.

Becker dreams of traveling and eating her way across the globe. She says she'd love to be a travel reviewer if she weren't

practicing law. Closer to home, her favorite spots include Ojai and Emma Wood State Beach, and her go-to restaurant is Paradise Pantry. A lover of French food and sushi, she also has a soft spot for wine tasting and spa treatments.

Becker's cultural tastes are as vibrant as her career. She enjoys watching *The West Wing*, *Schitt's Creek*, *Ted Lasso*, and *Two Weeks' Notice*. Her favorite reads include *Cooking for Picasso* and *Remarkably Bright Creatures*. And when it comes to sports, she loves to watch dance and tennis, and participates in ballet.

Her philosophy echoes the wisdom of Ruth Bader Ginsburg: "Whatever you choose to do, leave tracks. That means don't do it just for yourself. You will want to leave the world a little better for your having lived." With her warmth, dedication, and unwavering focus on family and community, Katie Becker is doing just that.

Sasha Collins: Ventura Native Carving Her Path in Estate Planning Law



Sasha Collins has been a member of the VCBA and the California State Bar since 2014. Practicing at Myers, Widders, Gibson Jones & Feingold, LLP, she has dedicated her legal career entirely to trust and estates law.

A Ventura native, Collins' journey to law was unplanned. Her first job at the Ventura County Probation Department involved helping write pre-sentencing reports, igniting an early interest in the legal system. This experience led to work in the evidence room at the Santa Barbara Police Department and an internship with the Santa Barbara District Attorney's Office, deepening her understanding of the justice

system and further fueling her passion for the law. Although she once aimed to work as a prosecutor, a "temporary" job as a paralegal at a trust and estates firm changed her path permanently.

Collins has also contributed to the local legal community by coaching mock trial at Thousand Oaks High School with Jody Moore. She is currently the co-chair of the Estate Planning and Probate Board and a past president of the Women Lawyers of Ventura County. She's also a former VCBA board member, illustrating her dedication to supporting colleagues and advancing the profession.

At home in Ventura, Collins is a devoted mother of two daughters and shares her space with two lively dogs who constantly bark. Despite the noisy home environment, she succeeded in recently publishing a

memoir, *Stopping to Feel: One Woman's Journey Toward Generational Healing*, chronicling her personal journey.

When not practicing law, Collins enjoys reading, hiking, and trips to the beach. Her favorite books include *The Glass Castle*, *Middlesex*, and *Homegoing*. She's a fan of spicy chicken sandwiches and frequents Rumfish y Vino, with Skating Plus, a childhood favorite that still holds a special place in her heart. She loves playing indoor volleyball, watching the World Series with family, and traveling anywhere tropical.

Collins' philosophy is captured in her favorite quote: "Acceptance is the solution to all of my problems." With her warmth, professional dedication, and commitment to personal growth, Collins embodies the spirit of the VCBA community.

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