



CITATIONS

OCTOBER – TWO THOUSAND TWENTY FIVE



BRIAN L. SOTTILE
VENTURA COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT'S
NEWEST COMMISSIONER

Rachel Coleman

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Guillermo "Bert" Partida

The Annual Bar Dinner and "Casino Royale" Theme

On November 15, 2025, the Ventura County Bar Association will celebrate more than 120 years as an association at our 40th Annual Installation and Awards Dinner. It will take place at the Four Points Sheraton Ventura Harbor Resort where we will be presenting the 2025 **Ben E. Nordman** Public Service Award, **Verna R. Kagan** Pro Bono Award, and the **James D. Loebl** Pro Bono Award. Sponsorship opportunities are still available.

To add to the ambiance, our invitees are asked to share in the "Casino Royale" theme with appropriate "Bond" attire, suggested but not required, including your best James Bond movie impression. I will take my martini shaken, not stirred.

For entertainment purposes only, we will be offering a casino night filled with Craps, Blackjack, Roulette, and Texas Hold'em style poker. As for my tips on playing Craps, I just stick to the pass line and avoid the supposed "sucker" bets. As for Blackjack, let the dealer bust if they are showing a card above six and never buy the insurance. Regarding Roulette, you just need to have clairvoyance and serious luck at guessing a number.

BEST HAND RANKINGS

Royal Flush	A K Q J 10
Straight Flush	10 9 8 7 6
Four-of-a-Kind	Q Q Q Q 5
Full House	A A A 7 7
Flush	A J 8 5 7
Straight	10 9 8 7 6
Three-of-a-Kind	Q Q Q 7 6
Two Pair	J J 9 9 2
One Pair	Q Q 6 9 2
High Card	A Q 6 5 10

WEAKEST

As for Texas Hold'em poker, I have always been a fan of Doyle Brunson. As for playing, the poker hand rankings still apply, with a Royale Flush being the top hand and bottom rank a high card in the best out of five cards. Usually, a cheat sheet is provided. The ace can be played as low or high card.

In Texas Hold'em you are dealt two cards face down. The dealer will then deal three cards face up in the middle of the table, which is also known as the flop. There will be a round of betting or folding depending on your cards and how your hand progresses, e.g. possible straight, full house, etc. One more card is dealt, which is the turn. Another round of betting and folding occurs or a "knock" where no one



Poker Game Structure

bets or folds. Finally, the last card is dealt, known as the river. Your hand is comprised of the best five cards from the community and your two cards initially dealt to you.

There are special names for people who hold on to cards and get a winning hand on the river. I just call them lucky.

I hope to see you all at the annual dinner. I look forward to playing a hand with you.

Please have a safe and enjoyable Halloween and Dias de La Muertos!



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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NEWS FROM THE COURT

VENTURA SUPERIOR COURT MOURNS THE PASSING OF JUDGE RYAN J. WRIGHT

It is with great sadness that the Ventura Superior Court announces the death of the **Honorable Ryan J. Wright**, Judge of the Superior Court. He passed away on September 24, 2025, after a long illness. He was 53 years old.



Judge Wright was elected to the Superior Court by Ventura County voters on June 8, 2010, and he was sworn into office on January 3, 2011. Before his hospitalization in August, 2025, he served as the Assistant Presiding Judge. For many years before that, Judge Wright served as the Supervising Judge of the Criminal Division, in which capacity he presided over the Court's Criminal Master Calendar. In his 13-year career on the bench, Judge Wright presided over hundreds of jury trials, many involving the most serious and high-profile criminal cases.

Judge Wright was born and raised in the City of Ventura. He attended Saint Bonaventure High School. Judge Wright earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from the University of California, Irvine, in 1994, and his Juris Doctor degree from Pepperdine University School of Law in 1997. While at Pepperdine, Judge Wright was elected to the position of Honor Board President. He served as an adjunct professor and as a student mentor for Pepperdine University School of Law during the entire time he was on the bench.

Judge Wright began his career in public service as a Reserve Deputy Probation Officer for the County of Los Angeles while he was a law student. During that time, Judge Wright spent countless hours counseling violent juvenile offenders. It was also during that time that Judge Wright clerked at both the Ventura County Public Defender's Office

and the Ventura County District Attorney's Office. Upon his law school graduation in 1997, Judge Wright was offered a full-time position as a Deputy District Attorney in the Ventura County District Attorney's Office. He was promoted to Senior Deputy District Attorney in 2007. During his years as a prosecutor, Judge Wright served in the misdemeanor, felony, sexual assault, domestic violence and narcotics units. He also was assigned full-time to the Thousand Oaks Police station for two years as the community prosecutor. Judge Wright received several awards as one of the top narcotics prosecutors in the state and in the nation by the United States Department of Justice, the United States Attorney's Office and the California Narcotics Association. Judge Wright was also honored twice as Ventura County Prosecutor of the Year.

Judge Wright served as a mentor for several judges, and he was known for his passionate commitment to judicial ethics, fairness, and impartiality. Judge Wright was instrumental in the Court's implementation of important efficiencies, including those improving criminal case management and jury selection. Judge Wright dedicated his life to public service. He believed that serving as a judge is a great honor and privilege which must be respected by hard work and dedication to the law, justice and the communities the Court serves. Judge Wright's passing is a tremendous loss for the Court. He leaves, however, an enduring legacy of excellence to which the judicial officers and staff of the Court shall always aspire.

REPRESENTATION FOR MILITARY SERVICEMEMBERS



The Ventura Superior Court is looking to create a panel of attorneys to represent military servicemembers facing default judgments.

The Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA) 50 USC sections 3901 set seq. requires a plaintiff to file an affidavit or declaration showing the defendant is not in military service before the plaintiff may obtain a default judgment. (50 U.S.C. section 3931, subdivision (a), (b)(1), (4).

"Servicemember" and "military service" is defined at 50 U.S.C. 3911(a) and (2).

When a defendant is in the military service, a judge must appoint an attorney to represent the defendant before the plaintiff may obtain a default judgment (as opposed to a default) See, 50 U.S.C. section 3931, subdivision (b)(2). This applies to any judicial proceeding in state court except criminal proceedings. (50 U.S.C. section 3931, subdivision (a) and (b)).

Apart from anything required by statute/rule, the Court would request proof the attorney is a member of the California State Bar in good standing please. If interested, please email, tempjudge@ventura.courts.ca.gov.

COURT SEEKS COMMENT ON PROPOSED CHANGES LOCAL RULES

The Ventura Superior Court has made proposed changes to its "Local Rules," and has invited comment. For example, CHAPTER 20 COURT INTERPRETING SERVICES RULE 20.03 REQUESTING AN INTERPRETER, in part, for Civil (including Small Claims and Unlawful Detainer), Family Law, Probate, and Juvenile Dependency cases, requires parties must request an interpreter a minimum of two (2) court days' notice is required for Spanish and Mixteco. Requests should must be made in writing using local form VN250 "Request for Interpreter" and are to be returned to the Clerk's Office as indicated on the form. Without sufficient notice as set forth in this rule, the court may be unable to provide an interpreter for the hearing which may then need to be continued.

The proposed changes to local rules, set to take effect January 1, 2026, may be found at: https://www.ventura.courts.ca.gov/local_rules/PLR_01-01-2026.pdf.

The judges would appreciate any comments or recommendations regarding these rules on or before Monday, October 27, 2025. Please email any questions or comments to: CommentsToProposedLocalRules@ventura.courts.ca.gov.

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BRIAN L. SOTTILE, VENTURA COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT'S NEWEST COMMISSIONER

By Rachel Coleman

After just two weeks of retirement, Commissioner **Brian L. Sottile** was selected by the Judges of the Ventura County Superior Court (VCSC) as its newest Commissioner. Prior to being selected, Sottile worked for the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office (LACA) for 26 years.

His latest assignment at LACA was as an Assistant City Attorney, in the capacity of Division Head Deputy in the Prosecution Division. Sottile wore various hats over his career with LACA such as Supervising Attorney of the Van Nuys Branch from November 2020 to June 2023; Assistant Supervising Attorney of the Van Nuys Branch from April 2016 to November 2020; Public Safety General Counsel from March 2008 to April 2016; Neighborhood Prosecutor in the Safe Neighborhoods Division from March 2005 to March 2008; and Prosecutor for the Chatsworth/San Fernando and Van Nuys Branches from November 1998 to January 2002 and February 2003 to March 2005. Sottile was an associate attorney with Sullivan, Sottile and Taketa, LLP from 2002 to 2003. Prior to becoming a member of the State Bar of California, Sottile obtained his Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of California, Riverside, and his Juris Doctor degree from San Joaquin College of Law.

In his capacity as a line prosecutor for the LACA, Sottile successfully conducted approximately 45 jury trials to verdict. He also managed thousands of cases while staffing arraignment, direct set, and master calendar courts. As a Neighborhood Prosecutor, Sottile focused on the vertical prosecution of quality-of-life crimes in North Hollywood. In this role, he collaborated with law enforcement, community groups, and various city and county departments to resolve community issues. Serving as General Counsel, he provided legal advice to the Los Angeles Police Department, the Los Angeles Board of Police Commissioners, and the Los Angeles Fire Department on civil litigation matters. He drafted legal opinions and ordinances, reviewed inter-agency agreements, managed civil



litigation, including Petitions for Writ of Mandamus, and handled California Public Records Act requests. Additionally, he conducted legal training for the police and fire departments and authored formal and informal legal opinions for them.

Serving as Public Safety General Counsel, Sottile authored approximately 20 public safety ordinances that significantly impacted both the local community and the operational procedures of the Los Angeles Police and Fire Departments. His work included drafting and implementing ordinances for critical areas such as firearms, ammunition, controlled substances, and police-permitted businesses, including massage parlors, valet operators and attendants, and automobile parking lot operators. Additionally, Sottile provided legislative support to the Los Angeles Police Department, assisting in the sponsorship of state-level legislation related to imitation firearms and the regulation of massage parlors.

In his most recent assignment at LACA as the Division Head Deputy in the Prosecution Division, he spent his days overseeing 14 supervisors, 150 attorneys, and 100 legal professionals across seven Los Angeles County courthouses. This role required managing daily operations, training and mentoring attorneys, and handling complex personnel matters. He also revolutionized the discovery process for criminal matters through the implementation of new

case preparation forms and procedures that streamlined case processing and allowed evidence to be expediently provided to defense counsel.

Although Sottile did not practice in Ventura County, he spent 26 years commuting from Ventura County to Los Angeles. He is grateful to be working in the community he has called home for so long. His wife of 29 years and three adult children look forward to spending more quality time with him, since he will not have to commute daily to and from Los Angeles. In addition to spending more time with his family, Sottile stated he “will enjoy having more time to work out, mountain bike and surf.”

For Sottile, the legal profession is more than a career—it's a family legacy. He often shares how his passion for the law began in childhood, recalling fond memories of going to work with his father, **Judge Bruce Sottile**. His father served as a Los Angeles Superior Court Judge for 17 years before spending two more decades as a private arbitrator and mediator.

Sadly, Judge Sottile passed away in 2024, just before he could witness his son's swearing-in ceremony. Sottile says that while his father wasn't there in person, he felt his spirit with him. In a deeply personal tribute, Sottile wore his father's judicial robes for the ceremony and for his entire first month on the bench. He also decorated his chambers with items from

his father's office, a constant reminder of the man who inspired him and a way to ensure a piece of him is always there.

The family legacy of law and public service is clearly thriving. His brother, **Timothy Sottile**, is a partner at a law firm of Sottile Baltaxe in Agoura Hills. One of Sottile's daughters is also carrying on the tradition. After recently graduating from law school, she's awaiting her bar exam results and hopes her father will have the honor of conducting her swearing-in ceremony. Sottile's other children have found their own impressive paths: one daughter works for a biotechnology company while earning her Master of Business Administration, and his son is set to graduate with a degree in sports medicine before starting dental school.

When it comes to his new role overseeing family law matters in Courtroom 34, Sottile draws on his diverse legal background and stated, "[his] experience in civil, criminal,

administrative, and management law provides [him] with a broad perspective that is particularly useful for the family law calendar." He finds family law unique, in that an attorney might advocate for a petitioner on a domestic violence restraining order one day and then represent a respondent on the same issue the next day. Drawing from his past experiences, he strives to be a calming presence in the courtroom for litigants and attorneys, understanding that the issues before him are often emotionally charged.

Sottile stated that he "ensures that every person who comes before me, whether they are a party or an attorney, is treated with the dignity and respect they deserve." He firmly believes that the appearance of justice is just as important as the act of doing justice. He strives to make the court more accessible, listen attentively to all parties, and ensure that every case is resolved in a fair, efficient, and impartial manner. By doing so, he believes it restores faith in the judicial system and helps people find healing and resolution.

As to any specific rules that Sottile prefers in Courtroom 34, he requested that all parties exchange trial briefs, exhibits, witness lists and exhibit lists no later than ten (10) court days prior to trial. He would also like all audio and video evidence to be submitted to the court on separate flash drives to be brought to court on the day of the trial.

If you haven't met Commissioner Sottile, you can find him in Courtroom 34 or surfing at the beach with his son.



Rachel Coleman
handles civil litigation
and family law matters.
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LAURIE NINTCHEFF - 2025 KAGAN AWARD RECIPIENT *By Paul Bujold*



Ventura County Legal Aid is honored to recognize **Laurie Nintcheff** as the recipient of the 2025 Kagan Pro Bono Award. Her dedication to serving others is evident in her consistent commitment. She joins VCLA at almost every legal clinic, offering guidance and support with landlord/tenant, guardianship, conservatorship, and consumer debt issues. Her welcoming personality immediately puts people at ease, creating a space where clients feel heard and supported.

Nintcheff earned her Bachelor of Arts in Communication from the University of California, San Diego, and her Juris Doctorate from the University of Southern California. Nintcheff's legal career has been guided by compassion, service, and the motto, "If I have the ability to help, I will." And help she does. During law school, Nintcheff clerked at the Children's Law Center in Monterey Park, assisting in representing minors in the

dependency system. She went on to practice labor and employment law before becoming a staff attorney at the Ventura Court's Civil Law Self Help Legal Access Center, where she served for a decade. There, she provided critical services to self-represented litigants on a wide variety of civil matters, sometimes seeing as many as 50 individuals in a single day. Nintcheff saw firsthand how overwhelmed people were when navigating the legal system on their own, and she understood the depth of the need, knowing she had the ability to help.

Her commitment to equal access to justice continued when she joined Ventura County Legal Aid in 2023 as a staff attorney, where she provided advice and counsel in elder abuse restraining order matters. Although her position was funded by a grant that later expired, Nintcheff did not stop serving. Instead, she chose to continue volunteering at the Family Justice Center and Walk-in Clinic. She recognized the public's need for ongoing assistance, and she knew Ventura County Legal Aid itself needed support to survive.

Nintcheff appreciated that VCLA gave her the opportunity to keep providing legal access to the community, and she has been an integral part of keeping its doors open.

Beyond her professional contributions, Nintcheff is a devoted wife to Andre, a Chief Deputy with the Public Defender's Office, with whom she has been married for more than 20 years. She is a proud mother of two children, now ages 13 and 9. She enjoys live music, reading, and traveling, and she is most proud of the challenging and meaningful role she embraced as a foster parent. In fact, she and her family originally moved to Ventura from Orange County simply because they wanted to get a dog, a small detail that reveals her openness to building a life around compassion and care.

Nintcheff embodies the spirit of pro bono service: compassion, dedication, and a steadfast belief in justice for all. It is with deep gratitude that we present her with the 2025 Kagan Pro Bono Award.

RYAN CASSON - 2025 LOEBL AWARD RECIPIENT *By Paul Bujold*



Ventura County Legal Aid is proud to honor **Ryan Casson** as the recipient of the 2025 Loeb Pro Bono Award. Casson finds joy in helping community members navigate questions related to trusts, probate, creditors, and bankruptcy. His hope is to continue deepening his involvement with VCLA and providing clients with the guidance and support they need.

Casson's educational path reflects his dedication to tax law. He earned his BBA in Finance from Walla Walla University, where he enjoyed taking tax, finance, and accounting courses. He earned his Juris Doctor from the Thomas M. Cooley Law School. He has also pursued advanced tax training through the California Lawyers Association Odyssey Tax Mentorship Program and in attending the 2023 Hawaii Tax Institute, strengthening his tax knowledge. Though tax laws are complex, Casson embraces them with enthusiasm and curiosity.

Licensed to practice law in California, Florida, Massachusetts, and South Dakota,

Casson has built a diverse and impactful practice. He began in Florida, where he spent seven years assisting veterans with disability appeals cases before the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims. In 2018, friends from childhood asked him to join their firm on Cape Cod, Massachusetts to learn estate planning and elder law, and he found his passion. During this time, he was also in a long-distance relationship with his now wife, Niccole, a musician who was born and raised in Camarillo. Drawn by both love and community, Casson relocated to Ventura County in July 2022, where he established his solo estate planning practice. In June 2025, he and Niccole married in Moorpark.

Among his professional milestones, Casson is especially proud of passing the California Attorney's Bar Exam while working full-time on Cape Cod, an accomplishment that speaks to his persistence and discipline. Though Casson never served, he is also proud of his time spent serving disabled veterans. "They were willing to give it all; I can give a little," he says.

Outside of work, Casson is a lifelong learner and history enthusiast. He has a deep admiration of Hawaii – its culture, history,

and natural beauty. He also enjoys learning languages, speaking some Spanish, and is currently studying Latin and German. His approach to life and work is summed up in his favorite Bob Marley quote: "*Live the life you love and love the life you live.*"

Casson's generosity, commitment to service, and passion for helping others exemplify the spirit of the Loeb Pro Bono Award. One of the qualities that sets him apart is the time and care he devotes to each client. He never rushes, spending as much time as needed, even staying long past closing. He does this to ensure clients are heard and supported. Casson frequently consults with fellow clinic attorneys on complex issues and takes the opportunity to teach, discussing cases and their legal intricacies with interns. Beyond the legal details, he speaks with compassion about the clients themselves and the difficult circumstances they face, reflecting his deep commitment to both the law and the people it affects. We are proud to honor him for the positive impact he makes in the lives of those he serves.

Paul Bujold is the Executive Director of Ventura County Legal Aid

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NOVEMBER 15, 2025

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NAVIGATING INTERNATIONAL DESTINATIONS WITH DISABILITIES

By Christal Porter, Sandra Rubio and Angela Salazar



ADA accommodations are often overlooked and not appreciated, until you or a loved one is in a position that can benefit from the accommodations. Ventura County Bar Association's Executive Director, **Sandra Rubio**, and her family (husband Joe and three sons Jacob 25, Joshua 24, and James 16) recently took a trip of a lifetime to Europe. At the time their travel arrangements were made, they did not know that Rubio's husband would be in between recovering from his left knee replacement and feeling the pain of needing a right hip replacement. Rubio writes about their European excursion while Joe had to utilize crutches, a walker, and wheelchairs throughout the trip.

Rubio's Trip

It is January 2025, and my husband has the travel bug. We consider possible destinations and rope in our sons for their input. After all the whimsical places we could go, reality sets in. We decided it would be nice to begin our travels with London, Paris, Milan, ending in Venice. We decided we would go at the end of July with the trip carried into beginning of August. Fast forward to April 2025, and my husband is having difficulties getting around and is led to believe, based on medical visits, that he has arthritis and sciatica in his right leg. He is now using a cane. Jump into May and now he is struggling to walk, while experiencing excruciating pain, and is using crutches. After numerous therapies, gadgets, tests, medications, it is determined that he will need a hip replacement. His right leg is already ailing from his bone-on-bone knee which needs to be replaced. Good news was that his surgery was going to be four days **after** returning from vacation. Bad news was that his surgery was four days **after** returning from vacation.

It is now the end of July and we were trying to be optimistic about him getting around

as a tourist. Plans had been made with all four airports on our excursion. All four were accommodating with his wheelchair needs. The pros of traveling with someone in a wheelchair in the airports was having private checkpoint access and feeling like a VIP as you pass the long lines. My husband and I were the first ones on the plane, but the last one-off and separated from our sons when departing the plane.

Our first stop was London. A highlight of this destination was visiting Buckingham Palace. It provided a wonderful experience for those with wheelchair needs. Free of charge, we entered through the changing of the guard gates on a golf cart and arrived in a vast courtyard which is inaccessible to the public. VIP treatment indeed. Next stop Paris, the city of love and light. We visited Disneyland and rented a wheelchair for 25 euros and gave a \$200 deposit. City Hall in Disneyland did not accept the doctor's note of my husband's condition in order to obtain a priority card. A con to the Disneyland Paris visit was that one must have a permanent disability to qualify for the priority card. This meant that my husband and I could still enter the rides from the exits, but instead of our entire party being able to go with us, we would be separated from our sons while they stood in the main lines. We had to wait for our sons to arrive so we could ride together as a family, so not quite the ideal VIP access if you want to experience the rides with everyone in your group. The Louvre offered special accommodations for wheelchair access getting in and around. One pro was the Mona Lisa exhibit. There is about 15 feet of space separating the portrait from the unfriendly shoving crowd trying to snap a close up. Staff permitted me to wheel my husband in the unobstructed space to see the famous exhibit for himself. Yes, we seized the moment and took a selfie.



Milan and Venice, our final stops, offered a different experience. We never saw anyone with a disability nor are the places we went disability friendly. The Airbnb we stayed at in Milan did not have an elevator and the second-floor apartment was six flights of stairs. The train station in Milan, to travel to Venice, was also not disability friendly. The VRBO in Venice was four flights of stairs. Now this "floating city" had infinite bridges which must have looked like a mine field to my husband. Many bathrooms were downstairs which were not accessible to disabled persons as they were windy, very small steps and impossible for crutches. Uber vehicles offered space to store his walker and crutches. However, for a party of 5 passengers, we were automatically assigned a Mercedes van.

All main attractions during our trip had disability policies and staff were friendly except at Disneyland. My husband took the difficulties of the trip in stride and never complained at any destination while getting around in his foldable crutches (thank you Amazon). However, it did help to give him some rest by purposely stopping at as many pubs, cafés, and ristorantes for refreshing libations.

American Protections

The ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990) is codified mainly at 42 U.S.C. §§ 12101 – 12213, and is divided into Five Titles, with Title II and III primarily impacting travel and tourism. Title II (Public Services): 42 U.S.C. §§ 12131–12165 and Title III (Public Accommodations): 42 U.S.C. §§ 12181–12189. The ADA was enacted in 1990, and much of the world models its disability laws and standards on America's ADA.

While the ADA governs everything regarding disabilities in the US, other countries have several policies, laws, treaties, etc. in place. With the various policies, it can be difficult to know which department oversees enforcement and compliance, who to complain to when there's a violation, and what to expect when traveling to these countries.

Policy Comparison

The second largest law/treaty in Europe is the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). It is an international standard encompassing 180+ countries. However, it is not self-enforcing and relies on each country correcting its shortcomings. The CRPD was enacted in 2006. Along with UN Tourism (UNWTO), the ONCE Foundation, and the European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT), they set practical guidelines to make travel more accessible to all, especially after COVID, when the number of people traveling with disabilities increased. The ONCE Foundation started as an organization for the blind in Spain, but it has expanded into European nations and worldwide to address the needs of disabled individuals in general, not just the blind. It has become an effective arm for promoting education, awareness, and change.

Although all these organizations make travel better for the disabled, they do not impose laws or legal consequences for not providing access to all. However, each country or region is motivated to spread accessibility for different reasons. The United States is litigation-driven, with reinforcement through the courts, while Sweden, consistently voted the most disability-friendly country in the world, is driven by social services and the removal of barriers. Maybe, while we need laws to get us there, the mindset in other countries requires different motivation, more carrot, less stick?

Those who travel with a disability must do extensive research before selecting a destination. However, there isn't one source or standard to compare and contrast the ease of accessibility. There's no rating system on a regional or worldwide scale that helps travelers identify what they'll be facing so they can make better choices.

One organization spearheading this vacancy is the Certified Accessible Travel Advocate program (CATA), which helps travelers identify accessible options and make informed choices. You can use an SNG CATA-certified travel agent local to your destination to book travel in over 70 countries. But if you're doing your own

research, more information can be found on personal websites and/or blogs by fellow disabled travelers than any organization or government entity.

Popular Travel Destination Policies

England:

England has the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on Disability Rights to help protect and promote the rights of the disabled. The focus is more on employment, education, and dealing with the police.

London:

The city is often listed as one of the best-equipped cities for travelers with disabilities, with the most SNG certified travel coordinators in Europe. Some of the top accessible attractions include: London Eye, Buckingham Palace, Royal Botanic Gardens, British Museum, National Gallery and Natural History Museum. European city with the largest number of wheelchair accessible hotel rooms.

Italy: Milan & Venice

In 2016, Italy made changes to its laws on provisions of assistance benefiting persons with serious disabilities who are deprived of family support. Italy made changes in 2024 to its legislation to adapt the Italian legal system to the United Nations and EU guidance on the rights of persons with disabilities. Italy was built centuries ago and of course faces architectural challenges incorporating accessibility. The laws seem to focus on defining disability and strengthening social services and leave behind the challenges of making spaces for all.

Travel in Venice is difficult. They've made great headway and made half of the city accessible, but it still leaves the other half of the city covered in cobblestone and bridges. There are neighborhoods without bridges, including areas surrounding St. Mark's Square, but it is still a challenge. The Vaporetto boats are somewhat wheelchair friendly. One important tip, per Sage Traveling, is that even though a hotel may be disability friendly, it may be located in an area that's not accessible to the Vaporetto without getting a special wheelchair taxi, which can get expensive. It is important to plan ahead and ask questions.

France: Paris

France has the Disability Law 2005, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2010, and the European Accessibility Act 2019. France has multiple laws and treaties asking it to become more inclusive. In the last two decades, France has been proactive in adapting to the UN requirements for accessibility, but it is another city with historical architecture that does not make the task easy to modernize. Paris still aims to provide inclusivity and to care for its disabled citizens and visitors. Wheelchair users get free access to the Louvre, Musee de l'Orangerie, Palace of Versailles, and more. But the city is difficult to navigate with a mobility impairment.

Conclusion

Frequently, when we hear the words "ADA" we think of inconvenient and expensive red tape/requirements, but when you or a loved one is temporarily or permanently disabled there can be a perspective shift on ADA accommodations. Traveling in other countries that do not have the ADA protections we enjoy here in the United States can be quite the challenge and certainly requires proper preparation.



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MEMBER SPOTLIGHTS

By Kathleen Maheu

DAVID ESQUIBIAS



If you've practiced trust and estate litigation in Ventura County any time over the past three decades, chances are you've crossed paths with **David Esquibias**. A longtime member of the Ventura

County Bar Association (he joined in 1995, just a year after being admitted to the California Bar), Esquibias has spent his entire legal career focused on probate, trusts, and estates. He has also served continuously since 1996 on the board of the VCBA's Estate Planning, Trust and Probate Section, making him a familiar presence in that community.

Raised in Los Angeles and now residing in Camarillo, Esquibias took a winding academic path before returning home to practice. He earned his J.D. from Vermont Law School, followed by an LL.M. in Taxation from Villanova University. His undergraduate degree came from UC Irvine. Today, he is a partner at Westlake Law Group, PLC.

When asked why he became a lawyer, Esquibias doesn't point to a moment of revelation or a formative case. Instead, he recalls his father's simple prophecy: "When I was a little boy my father told me I would grow up to be a lawyer." He never looked back.

Although he's built a successful practice, Esquibias admits he might have chosen a different calling had law not taken root. "Cooking," he says without hesitation. He also confesses to being an introvert at heart, a detail that may surprise colleagues accustomed to seeing him in action in Probate Court.

Outside the office, Esquibias prizes relationships above all else. He and his wife, Angelique Friend, share two adult children, Liza and Avery, along with a lively household of pets: a black Lab named Molly, a small dog named Fatty, and two cats, Crackie and Barbara. He jokes that his favorite form of exercise is "arguing with my wife – she is undefeated."

Travel and food are also passions. He loves wandering the old towns of foreign cities, eating Greek or Italian cuisine, and keeping

his favorite vacation spot a closely guarded secret. Closer to home, he names Channel Islands National Park as his favorite Ventura County locale and the Busy Bee, once owned by his father, as his favorite local restaurant.

His bookshelf leans toward 19th century novels but also includes Ken Follett's *Pillars of the Earth*, John Kennedy O'Toole's *A Confederacy of Dunces*, and John Irving's *The World According to Garp*. He's drawn to foreign-language films, and when it comes to sports, he prefers to watch the stock market.

Esquibias also keeps a few guiding principles in mind. His favorite written law is the maxims of jurisprudence in the Civil Code. "Read them!" he insists, and his favorite quote is one he overheard years ago in a courtroom: "Be careful what you wish for—you might just get it."

After 30 years in practice, Esquibias remains deeply committed to the profession. And whether in court, at Busy Bee, or wandering far-off towns, he continues to value what he prizes most: relationships.

LORI M. DOBRIN



Lori M. Dobrin has been a member of the Ventura County Bar Association since 2011, but her legal journey began much earlier. Admitted to the California Bar in 1990 after earning

her law degree from Emory University School of Law, she first practiced civil litigation and unlawful detainer. Today, she is a statewide panel mediator with ARC and the Mediation Center of Los Angeles, focusing on personal injury, professional negligence, real estate, business disputes, and unlawful detainer matters.

Dobrin's dedication to alternative dispute resolution has made her a well-known figure in Southern California's mediation community. She co-chairs the VCBA's ADR section, volunteers as a mediator for the Ventura Superior Court and the U.S. District Court, Central District, and serves as a settlement officer in multiple counties.

She is also a trainer and speaker, sharing her expertise on mediation and negotiation through programs such as the Mediation Mastery Certification and Bet Tzedek Legal Services.

Originally from Commack, Long Island, Dobrin now calls Camarillo home with her husband of 35 years, Joel. Their daughters, Jenna and Rachel, both participated in Ventura County's Mock Trial program while attending Rio Mesa High School, a full-circle connection for a family deeply tied to the legal community.

Outside of her professional commitments, Dobrin treasures time with her family and close friends. She finds balance through walking, reading, Pilates, dancing, and, not least, cooking, something that has long been a passion. Years ago, she even created a line of salad dressings that were sold in Whole Foods and other gourmet markets. If law had not been her path, she imagines she would be attending endless cooking classes and teaching others by demonstration.

Her favorite places reflect her appreciation for both beauty and relaxation: Maui for

its serenity, and Tuscany for its food, wine, and history. And while she enjoys visiting restaurants, Dobrin insists her favorite dining spot is still her own kitchen, where Italian food often takes center stage.

When asked about professional inspiration, Dobrin points to Barbara Walters, whose skill in asking probing questions resonates with the craft of mediation. Her favorite statute is California Rule of Court 3.1385, governing notice of settlement—fitting for a mediator. She also holds close Maya Angelou's words: "People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." Dobrin strives to embody that philosophy, both in her work and in her personal life.



Kathleen "Kat" Maheu is an associate attorney practicing family law with Pachowicz | Goldenring, a PLC, and Managing Editor of CITATIONS. She can be reached at kat@pglaw.law.

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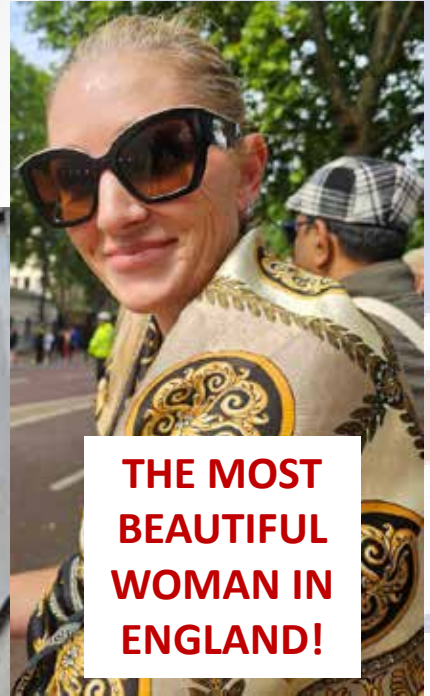
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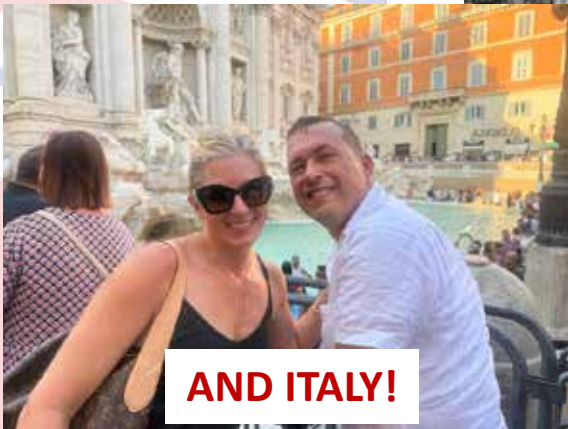
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