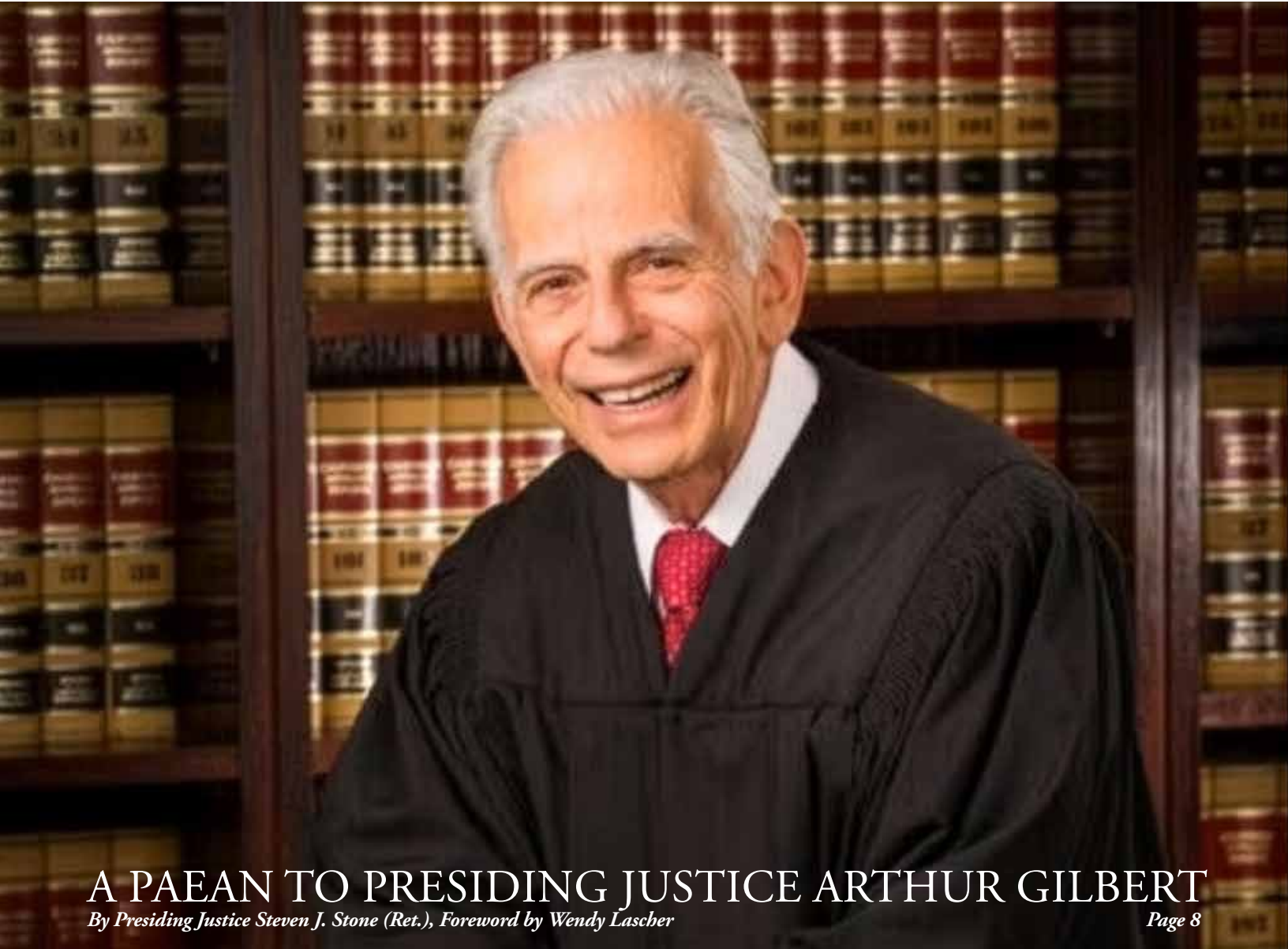




CITATIONS

JANUARY - TWO THOUSAND TWENTY SIX



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Kristine Tijam

Happy New Year to all of you. I hope you all enjoyed a peaceful and restful holiday season with your loved ones. In thinking about the main concepts I wanted to convey for my first "President's Message," service and sacrifice came to mind. Those same values embody the core tenets of the Ventura County Bar Association and are the themes I hope to lead VCBA with this year. Being inspired by those ideals from people throughout my life, and my experiences, are ultimately the reasons why I now have the honor of writing this article.



My parents immigrated to the United States from the Philippines when they were adults, before I was born. Throughout my life, I witnessed their love, support, sacrifice, and strong work ethic. They instilled in me many of the important values and morals I continue to hold today. They showed me the importance of generosity, kindness, and helping others throughout my life. I would not be where I am today if it weren't for them.

With my father serving in the U.S. Navy for 20 years, my family and I moved around a bit during my childhood. I was born in Central California, where we lived for a few years. Thereafter, we spent the next few years in Louisiana. I fondly remember weekends spent taking the ferry on the Mississippi River to New Orleans, where I would enjoy beignets and hot chocolate at Cafe Du Monde and walk around the French Quarter. We celebrated Mardi Gras every year and ate King Cake. Once, we even had to take an unplanned road trip to flee a possible hurricane, ending up in Mississippi.

Luckily, we eventually returned to our home that was unscathed. After a few years in Louisiana, we moved to Ventura County. As an adult, I realize that my fond childhood memories were made possible due to the service and sacrifices by my parents.

College then led me to Santa Barbara, specifically, UCSB. After graduation, I began working in the litigation department of a workers' compensation insurance company in Agoura Hills. In that role, I was around attorneys for the first time in my life and learned some of the roles they played in society. That experience inspired me to attend law school in the evenings at The Colleges of Law while I continued to work full-time during the day.

Shortly after beginning law school, I became a claims adjuster at the same company. In that position, I repeatedly witnessed the difficulties that so many had in navigating a legal system that might as well have been a foreign language to them. This was especially the case for injured laborers that did not speak or understand English. Explaining the system and available benefits to countless injured individuals further opened my eyes to the importance, and necessity, of educating the community on their legal rights.



After graduating from law school and passing the bar exam in 2018, I was hired as a litigation attorney at Procter, Shyer & Winter, LLP in Camarillo, where I have been proudly working for almost 8 years. I have also had the privilege of serving as an adjunct professor at The Colleges of Law for the past few years. It has been rewarding to contribute to our legal community in these

capacities, wherein I have also learned so much from attorneys, judges, and other legal professionals.

As I am sure many of you will agree, much of the learning about the actual practice of law happens after graduating law school. As a new attorney, I was invited to join the Ventura County Barristers. I felt this was an excellent way to not only help serve the public, but also learn more about our legal community and the actual practice of law. Meeting so many local young and new attorneys provided a sense of camaraderie, and it was also incredibly inspiring to see their efforts to serve our legal community.

Past VCBA president **Marc Anderson** then invited me to join the VCBA Board of Directors beginning in 2021. This role allowed me to meet even more inspiring attorneys working hard for our community. In 2022, I had the honor of serving as the chairperson of the VCBA Community Outreach Committee started that year by then-VCBA President, **Jacquelyn Ruffin**. As many of you know, the purpose of that committee, and by extension the Attorneys Sharing Knowledge ("A.S.K.") program, is to provide free legal education to the community through presentations and partnerships with various community organizations.

Throughout my years with Barristers, VCBA, and then the Ventura County Asian American Bar Association, I have seen that our legal profession is stronger and most impactful when we unite and serve the community. Of course, community service requires sacrifice. I fully recognize that most, if not all of us, are already overworked and stretched thin across our various obligations. However, what continues to inspire me are the efforts that our local legal professionals continually take on to serve the public. Many of those who I have had the pleasure of working with can be accurately described by the following quote: "If you want something done, ask a busy person."

As legal professionals, our education and experience have given us knowledge and skills that are easy to take for granted. We are generally aware of our rights and/or at

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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least know how to do the research to find out what they are. We are used to navigating our legal system that can be intimidating to many. We have plenty of experience with oral and written communication. These skillsets working in tandem with our formal educations have effectively broken down the barriers that stand in the way of many understanding their basic legal rights and navigating complex systems that we interact with routinely. Those realizations are what I believe continue to prompt many of us to sacrifice our time to share our knowledge with the public.

It is my distinct honor and privilege to serve as the 2026 President of the Ventura County Bar Association. Some of the goals I have for this year are to continue our public service efforts through VCBA's Community Outreach Committee, strengthen relationships with local organizations and among VCBA's sections and affiliates, support our community's law students, maintain communication with the courts,

and help increase access to justice. I look forward to working with this year's VCBA Executive Committee (**Damon Jenkins, Alexander Tron, and Guillermo "Bert" Partida**), the VCBA Board of Directors, and VCBA staff.

Notably, we are proud to welcome back the Ventura County Trial Lawyers Association and the Ventura County Asian American Bar Association as sections under VCBA. I am hopeful that VCBA will continue to grow as a hub and resource center for the various legal organizations in our community.

Throughout my life, I have been blessed to witness service and sacrifice from those around me. I intend to carry those values throughout this year and encourage you all to sacrifice a bit of your time, knowledge, or any other service to help our legal community. These are key facets of VCBA and one of the core reasons why we exist. Please feel free to reach out to me if you would like to introduce yourself or have

any thoughts you want to share. If any of you are interested in getting involved, such as through the Community Outreach Committee, please let us know. We will do our best to highlight various opportunities as they arise. I wish you all a wonderful 2026 and look forward to seeing familiar faces and meeting new ones at our events this year!



Kristine Tijam is a civil litigation attorney at Procter, Shyer & Winter, LLP and an adjunct law professor at The Colleges of Law. Her practice focuses on representing cities,

businesses, and individuals in various types of lawsuits. She can be reached at kristine@proctershyster.com or (805) 603-8623.

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NEWS FROM THE COURT

Judicial Assignment Changes

Effective January 5, 2026, please note the following judicial assignment changes in the Ventura Superior Court:

Judge Gilbert A. Romero will be reassigned to Department J6

Judge Carla J. Ortega will be reassigned to Department J4

Judge Marine Dermadzhyan will be reassigned to Department J3

Judge Carol L. Hubner will be reassigned to Department J1

Judge Roger L. Lund will be reassigned to Department 33

Judge Kevin DeNoce will be reassigned to Department 41

Judge Paul W. Baelly will be reassigned to Department 11

Judge Ferdinand P. Innumerable will be reassigned to Department 13

Judge Kristi J. Peariso will be reassigned to Department 26

Judge Diana Weiss Aizman will be reassigned to Department 27

Judge Ethel R. Hernandez will be reassigned to Department 37

Judge Charmaine H. Buehner is moving from Department J4 to Department 44

Asset Forfeiture and W&I Code §§ 8102 and 8103 Deadly Weapons Matters

Beginning January 5, 2026, Ventura County Superior Court will centralize Asset Forfeiture and Welfare and Institutions Code sections

8102 and 8103 deadly weapons matters before **Judge Marine Dermadzhyan** in Courtroom J3 at the Juvenile Justice Center in Oxnard.

Asset Forfeiture cases will be heard on the first Monday of each month at 1:30 p.m. Deadly weapons cases, including Requests to Challenge Disqualified Persons, will be heard on Monday afternoons at 1:30 p.m.

All filings for these case types must be submitted to the Civil Clerk's Office at the Hall of Justice in Ventura. The Juvenile Justice Center in Oxnard will not accept filings for these matters. Remote appearance details will be issued separately on the Court's website.

Civil Harassment Matters Moving to Juvenile Justice Center

Beginning January 5, 2026, Civil Harassment Restraining Order matters will be assigned to **Judge Carol L. Hubner** in Courtroom J1 at the Juvenile Justice Center in Oxnard. Hearings on civil harassment restraining orders will take place on Mondays and Fridays at 2:30 p.m., with civil harassment ex parte hearings heard in the same courtroom at 1:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

All civil harassment cases currently assigned to **Commissioner Brian L. Sottile** in Courtroom 34 will be reassigned to Judge Hubner as of that date.

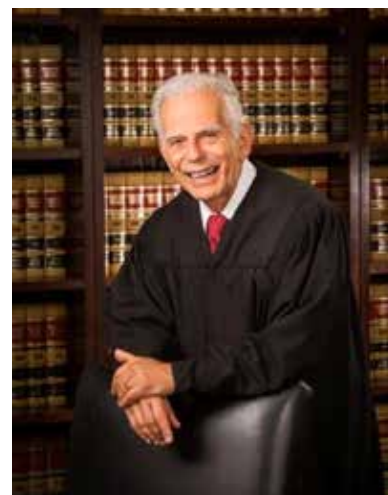
Civil Harassment Restraining Order filings may be submitted in person at the Juvenile Justice Center in Oxnard, by U.S. mail, or via the courthouse drop box. These filings will not be accepted at the Hall of Justice in Ventura.

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HAVE YOU HEARD?



The Ventura County Bar Association and Ventura County Trial Lawyers Association will join in a celebration honoring Justice Arthur Gilbert's retirement after 50 years in the legal profession. The celebration will take place at the Holiday Inn, Oxnard, on Thursday, January 8, 2026, starting at 5:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. for socializing, followed by a presentation from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Hors d'oeuvres will be served. Please contact VCBA to RSVP. \$30 for VCBA or VCTLA members; \$40 for non-members.

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A PAEAN TO PRESIDING JUSTICE ARTHUR GILBERT

By Presiding Justice Steven J. Stone (Ret.), Foreword by Wendy Lascher



Justice Gilbert (left), Justice Stone (middle), and Justice Kenneth Yegan (right).

“What is the standard of review?”

That is the question **Presiding Justice Arthur Gilbert** asked litigants at every Division Six calendar for the past 43 years. Now, we have to ask ourselves, “what standard of review should we apply to Justice Gilbert’s career?” His official retirement was December 30, 2025, but his last appearance as Presiding Justice was during some of the cases on the Court’s November calendar.

The *de novo* standard of review applies when there are no disputed facts. “The source of judicial authority lies ultimately in the faith of the people that a fair hearing may be had.” (*Catchpole v. Brannon* (1995) 36 Cal App 4th 237, 253.) No one could dispute Justice Gilbert’s adherence to the quest for fairness.

The *abuse of discretion* standard evaluates whether a judge has acted arbitrarily or capriciously. Justice Gilbert’s thoughtful words and impactful actions show the opposite.

The *substantial evidence* standard requires examination of the whole record for any evidence (even disputed evidence) supporting a decision. A scintilla would meet the standard but in Justice Gilbert’s case the evidence of a remarkable judicial career is overwhelming.

Backword by Presiding Justice Steven J. Stone (Ret.)

Presiding Justice Gilbert Abandons Us

Effective December 30, 2025, Presiding Justice Arthur Gilbert will no longer be the Presiding Justice of our tri-counties Court of Appeal. He is retiring. How dare he!!!

It was a dark and stormy night in December, 1982. I was driving through Malibu Canyon to Santa Monica to meet, for the first time, Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Arthur Gilbert. The two of us had just been elevated, along with Shasta County Superior Court **Judge Richard Abbe**, to the newly established Division Six of the Second District Court of Appeal. I had never met either Arthur or Richard.

The Division is responsible for hearing all appeals from the Superior Courts of the Counties of Ventura, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo and on occasion, Los Angeles.

When I parked at the Santa Monica Courthouse Arthur came out to meet me. He was hunched over in the wind, wearing a bulky raincoat, a Jackie Coogan cap on his head and a long, long scarf. It was raining cats and dogs. I thought “hmmmmmm.” We went for a drink at a local watering hole and began a long, productive, and warm friendship that continues to this day.

Arthur is the consummate intelligent wordsmith. He has the training and ability

to study the case record, find and apply the pertinent law and distill it down to a reasoned and understandable decision. His numerous published opinions are clear and mostly appreciated by all lawyers. (Perhaps not so much by the losers). His analyses of the cases are fully cogent and instructive.

Arthur’s knowledge of the English language makes reading his cases never boring. It is a treat to read his cases and his occasional humorous asides.

From the bench, Arthur always treated people with serious attention, politeness and occasional joshing.



Justice Gilbert (left), Justice Abbe (middle), and Justice Stone (right) take a spin.

How Arthur was able to be so productive as an appellate justice is a bit of a mystery. Many may know that Arthur is also an extremely accomplished and passionate jazz pianist who continues to perform. His talent is well known in jazz circles and other venues around Los Angeles and beyond.

You may also know that Arthur has written a monthly column for the *Daily Journal* for more than 30 years, which he insists he will continue to do. It is a first-of-the-month breath of fresh air for a profession that is too often dominated by conflict.

He will now have more time to devote to his love of music and his love of writing.

Arthur has spent 50 years as a judge and justice. Those years have been a boon to all Californians.

His wisdom and knowledge of the law together with his appreciation of the

human condition will be missed by all who worked with him or appeared before him.

On a personal note, Arthur, you have made us all proud and I know others join me in wishing you the best of luck and the fruitful and rewarding retirement you so deserve.

And brief codas from two of the many, many appellate lawyers who will miss Justice Gilbert.

From David Glassman:

"One of the remarkable traits I observed over 40 years is that Justice Gilbert always made it clear that he was listening to each side. He encouraged a dialogue in every case about what was the legally correct result.

That approach extended to communicating with an audience of non-lawyers, especially students. Whether he was addressing high school students, college students or law students, Justice Gilbert wanted people to

be assured that the system works in the way we hope it does – an attempt to be fair. Maybe it's a reflection of his background as a musician – he is thinking about an audience and not just a composition. And he was very patient with different and even unorthodox perspectives – often more patient than I would have liked."

From Robert Gerstein:

"A couple of additional qualities that make Arthur the unique person he is. First, his ebullient personality makes him a much sought-after speaker, as well as writer, of his wit and wisdom.

Second, his columns reflect an ineffable sense of something under the surface that cannot be expressed fully in declarative prose. I believe that there, Arthur is offering us a peek into his deeper understanding of the human condition. That depthful understanding enriches every aspect of his work."



Steven J. Stone served as Presiding Justice of the California Court of Appeal, Second Appellate District, Division Six from December 3, 1982 until his retirement on

January 5, 1999, after a judicial career that also included service as a Ventura County Superior Court judge. Born in Vienna, Austria, he earned his J.D. from Hastings College of Law and, after retiring from the bench, continued to work in mediation and arbitration.



Wendy Lascher, a partner at Ferguson Case Orr Paterson LLP, is a State Bar-certified specialist in appellate practice, as well as a private pilot. She is a former editor of

CITATIONS and current member of the CITATIONS editorial board.



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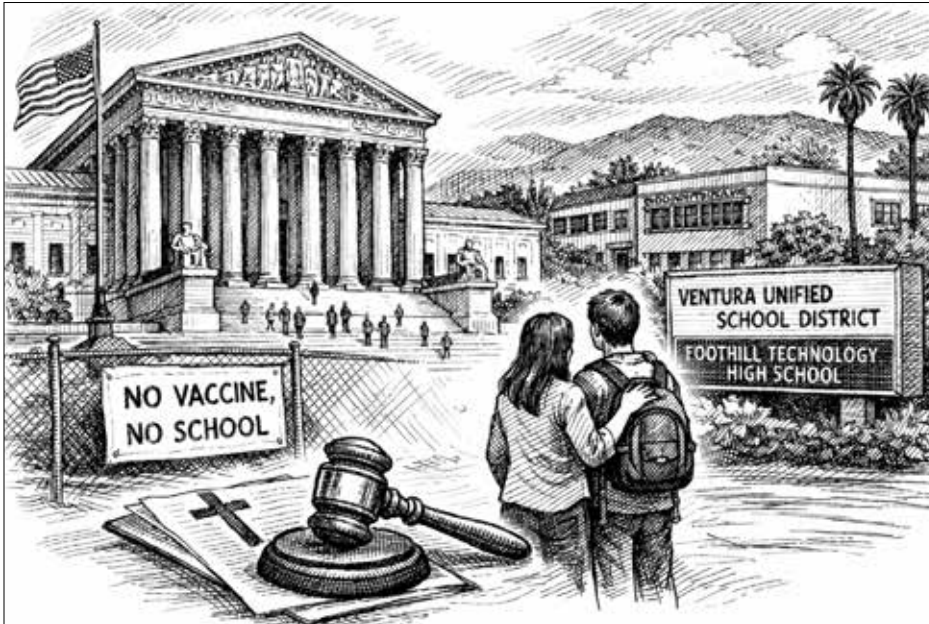
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U.S. SUPREME COURT REJECTS EMERGENCY BID BY VENTURA COUNTY FAMILY CHALLENGING SCHOOL VACCINE MANDATE AT FOOTHILL TECHNOLOGY

By Mari K. Rockenstein



The United States Supreme Court has denied a local family's request to intervene in its fight with the Ventura Unified School District over vaccines. The case of *We the Patriots v. Ventura Unified School District* centers on a legal challenge to California's school vaccination requirements based on claims of religious freedom.

The case involved a lawsuit filed by the nonprofit *We the Patriots USA, Inc.* and a parent identified as *Jane Doe*, whose high-school-aged son was barred from attending Foothill Technology High School in Ventura for failing to meet California's mandatory immunization requirements.

The lawsuit argues that California's Health and Safety Code sections 120325-120375, which require students to be vaccinated to attend school, and which removed personal belief exemptions in 2015, violates the mother's Christian faith. The objection stems from the claim that some vaccines were developed or tested using fetal cell lines derived from abortions performed decades ago.

The *Ventura Unified School District* said it determined, in November 2024, that a high school student didn't meet California's immunization requirements. His parents submitted records of homeoprophylaxis "vaccines," a homeopathic treatment whose

proponents claim prevents infectious disease. California law recognizes only vaccines approved by the federal vaccine advisory committee. Homeoprophylaxis vaccines do not qualify. After the parents refused to update the vaccine records, the student was removed from school.

The parents applied for a religious exemption, but California's legislature had ended the opt-out years ago. In March of this year, the parents submitted a disability vaccine waiver from a Texas organization; however, California requires medical exemptions from in-state providers.

School officials initiated truancy notification letters due to the student's chronic absenteeism. According to school officials, the parents never inquired about homeschooling their son; instead, they insisted that he be reinstated at his previous in-person high school.

The plaintiffs first filed a lawsuit in May 2025 in the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California, seeking a temporary restraining order and preliminary injunction. After the district court and the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals denied relief, *We the Patriots* filed an emergency appeal with the United States Supreme Court, asking for an injunction to allow the student to return to school while the main

lawsuit proceeded in lower court. The group cited the court's new precedent in *Mahmoud v. Taylor*, which gave Maryland parents an opt-out whenever LGBTQ books were used in classrooms. *We the Patriots* claimed that the same principle applied to the parents' opposition to immunizations based on an attenuated connection to abortions.

The Supreme Court denied the emergency application for a writ of injunction on October 17, 2025. The one sentence denial provided no explanation for its decision. This denial allowed the school district to continue enforcing California's school vaccine mandates while the underlying lawsuit remains pending in the lower courts.

We the Patriots, et al v. Ventura Unified School District, et al. --- S.Ct. ---, 2025 WL 2944628 (Mem) (2025)



Mari K. Rockenstein is a member of the CITATIONS editorial board and serves as Counsel in the Office of General Counsel for the U.S. Navy.

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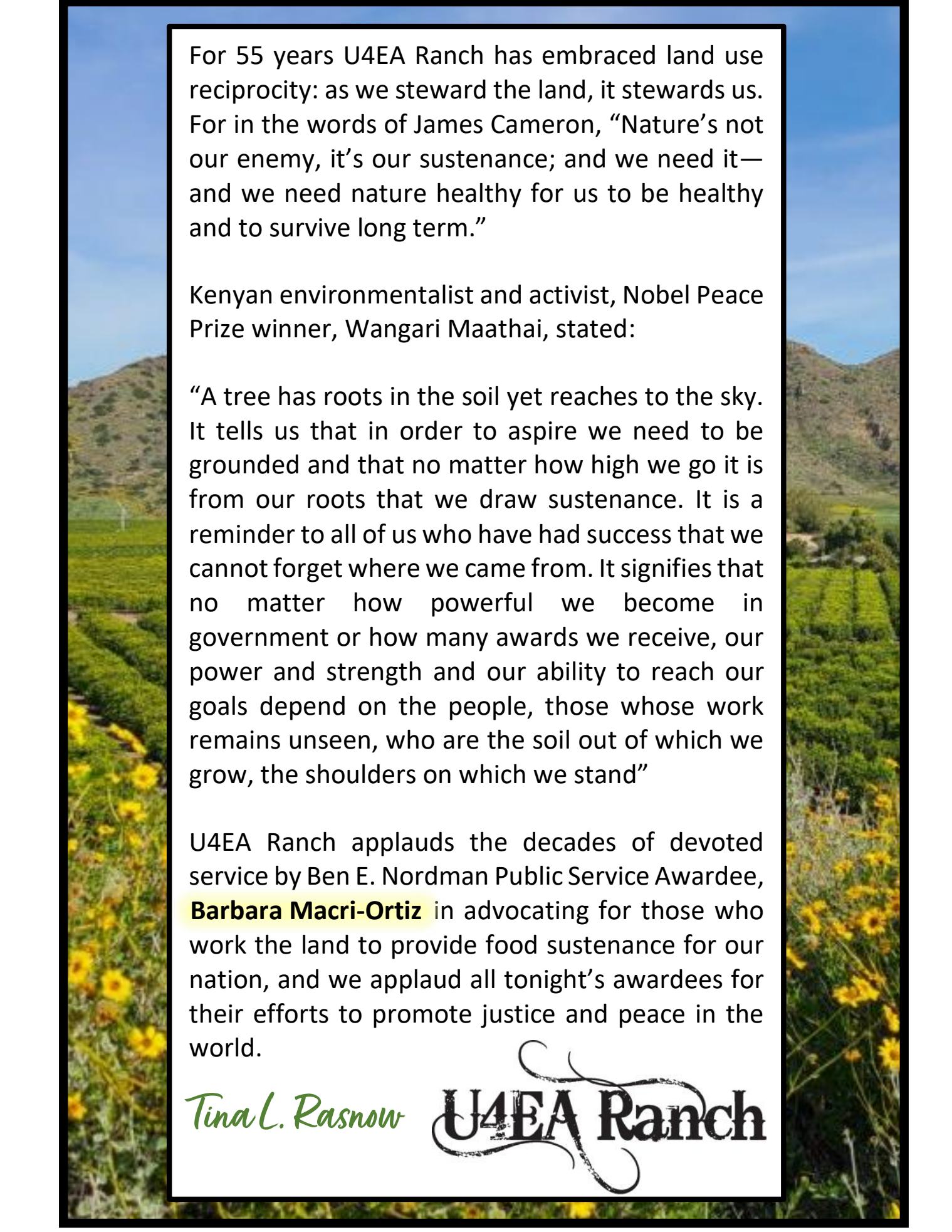
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U4EA Ranch applauds the decades of devoted service by Ben E. Nordman Public Service Awardee, **Barbara Macri-Ortiz** in advocating for those who work the land to provide food sustenance for our nation, and we applaud all tonight’s awardees for their efforts to promote justice and peace in the world.

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MEMBER SPOTLIGHTS: SAM MOJABI AND MARI K. ROCKENSTEIN

By Kathleen Maheu



Sam Mojabi practices family law as part of the Family Law Facilitator's Office at Ventura County Superior Court, where he assists self-represented litigants navigating some of the most personal and emotionally charged issues the court sees. His work places him at the intersection of law, public service, and access to justice, a role he has embraced since the beginning of his legal career.

Mojabi has been a member of the Ventura County Bar Association since 2020 and has practiced law since his admission to the California Bar in 2017. A Ventura County native, he grew up in Camarillo and continues to call it home. He earned his undergraduate degree from California State University, Fullerton, majoring in business with an emphasis on marketing, before receiving his law degree from Ventura College of Law.

From the outset of his career, Mojabi has focused exclusively on family law. In the Facilitator's Office, he works directly with members of the public who often come to court without counsel, helping them understand procedures, prepare documents, and move their cases forward within the bounds of the law. The role reflects Mojabi's longstanding interest in service-oriented legal work and his belief that the legal system should be navigable even for those without representation.

Mojabi is deeply involved in the local legal community. He has been an active

VCBA member since 2020 and a member of the Ventura County Family Law Bar Association since that same year. He joined the VCFLBA board in 2022 and is slated to serve as its President in 2026. Mojabi is also a member of the California Family Law Facilitator's Association. His commitment to service extends beyond bar leadership. He volunteered at the Conejo Free Clinic from 2021 through 2024 and has previously volunteered at other clinics as well. He has also been actively involved in mock trial programs, serving as an assistant coach at La Reina High School from 2017 to 2018 and continuing to volunteer in Ventura County competitions.

Family and personal relationships are central to Mojabi's life. He has no children but is engaged and is a devoted uncle to three nieces and one nephew. He and his fiancé share their home with two dachshunds, Justice and Yzy.

Law was never a tentative choice for Mojabi. He recalls wanting to be a lawyer from as early as he can remember, influenced both by family encouragement and by watching legal shows and movies. As he grew older, the profession aligned naturally with his desire to assist others and with the skills he believed he could bring to the field. If he were not practicing law, Mojabi says he would be working on cars. In another life, he would be building off-road vehicles and tuning high-performance sports cars, from Jeep Wranglers and sand rails to boosted sports cars.

Many colleagues may not realize that Mojabi has a strong comedic side and a love for jokes and humor. Because most people know him through professional interactions involving active cases, that side of his personality rarely surfaces at work. In family law, he notes, humor can quickly be misinterpreted or used against a client, making restraint an important professional skill.

Asked which historic figures he would most like to interview, Mojabi named **Ruth Bader Ginsburg** and Tupac, reflecting

both respect for legal trailblazers and an appreciation for cultural icons.

Mojabi describes himself as a homebody. His preferred way to relax is spending weekends at home with friends or family, often with no plans beyond possibly golfing and spending time together. His favorite Ventura County locale is simply home when it is filled with people he enjoys. His favorite Ventura County restaurant is Toppers, and his favorite foods are a close tie between street tacos and lomo saltado.

He enjoys watching basketball and has recently returned to golf after stepping away during his teenage years, when football and basketball took priority. He now tries to play at least once a month. His favorite forms of exercise include walking in the crisp morning air and lifting weights.

Mojabi's favorite car is the Nissan GTR. His favorite vacation destination is Glamis, California, which he has visited annually since 2018. He values Glamis as a place to disconnect from technology and reconnect with friends, often traveling with a large group that includes RVs, off-road vehicles, and extended circles of family and friends.

When it comes to the law itself, Mojabi's favorite statute is Family Code section 4320, particularly its focus on the standard of living established during the marriage. He appreciates the statute's emphasis on the tangible details of marital life, from lifestyle to travel to vehicles, viewing it as one of the most revealing components of spousal support analysis.

His favorite quote comes from Ruth Bader Ginsburg: "It helps to be a little deaf." Mojabi believes the sentiment applies equally to marriages and to the practice of law. Not every unkind or thoughtless word warrants a response, and restraint often does more to advance understanding than reacting in anger ever could.



Mari K. Rockenstein serves as Counsel in the Office of General Counsel for the United States Navy, where she functions much like in-house counsel, advising on a wide range of legal issues that touch nearly every aspect of government operations. Her practice spans acquisition and contracts, fiscal law, employment law, intellectual property, environmental law, FOIA, privacy and cyber law, administrative law, litigation, and ethics, reflecting both the breadth and complexity of her role.

Rockenstein earned her law degree from Santa Clara University School of Law after completing her undergraduate education at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. She began her legal career practicing intellectual property at a large Silicon Valley law firm, where her work quickly expanded into additional practice areas as client needs evolved. That early exposure to diverse legal problems laid the groundwork for the wide-ranging advisory role she now holds.

In addition to her full-time counsel position, Rockenstein is active in legal education. She serves as an adjunct law professor at both California State University Channel Islands and California Lutheran University. She has also contributed to the Ventura County Bar Association as a member of the CITATIONS Editorial Board, supporting the publication that connects and reflects the local legal community.

Rockenstein's interests outside of work reveal a strong creative streak. If she were not practicing law, she imagines several alternative paths, including becoming a novelist, a foreign correspondent, or a filmmaker, ideally with a rock band on the side. Having attended school on the California Central Coast, she also notes that winemaking is a common aspiration in that environment.

Many colleagues may not know that Rockenstein worked as a radio disc jockey during college, both at a college station and at commercial radio stations. She enjoyed the experience so much that she seriously considered forgoing law school altogether. Her time on the air also led to frequent invitations to DJ parties, adding another unexpected chapter to her pre-law life.

When asked which historic figures she would most like to interview, Rockenstein named **Sandra Day O'Connor** and **Ruth Bader Ginsburg**, or, failing that, simply sharing a thoughtful conversation with them over coffee.

Relaxation for Rockenstein often involves being outdoors. She enjoys reading in a lounge chair overlooking the ocean or a mountain range, as well as hiking in similar settings with her family and their dogs. She describes a particular fondness for the area near the Ventura County and Los Angeles County border, especially Spa Relais and The Stonehaus at the Westlake Village Inn.

Rockenstein is an avid reader and resists choosing favorites, having read widely across authors and genres. At the top of her list, however, are Agatha Christie and P.D. James. She also enjoys discovering new authors through her children's reading, which has introduced her to books and genres she might not otherwise have explored. Her favorite films similarly reflect a love of storytelling, with standouts including *To Kill a Mockingbird*,

Rear Window, *North by Northwest*, *The Shawshank Redemption*, and *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

Her preferred forms of exercise are largely outdoor activities, including kayaking, archery, hiking, cycling, and yoga. Travel favorites include Ireland and Cambria, California. She also has a fond memory of her first car, a candy-apple-red Acura Integra, which she remembers as both fast and formative.

Dogs play an important role in Rockenstein's life. She and her family have always had rescue dogs, most often German shepherds and Siberian huskies, and she speaks warmly of their energy and presence.

Rockenstein's favorite quote varies depending on the day, but one that resonates with her and her children comes from Walt Disney's *Meet the Robinsons*: "We keep moving forward, opening new doors, and doing new things, because we're curious and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths." The sentiment reflects both her professional path and her approach to life.



Kathleen "Kat" Mabeu 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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HANNA MALCO, ESQ

Hanna is an associate attorney at Negley Law, APC. A Ventura native and fourth-generation resident, she has deep community roots, including service with the National Charity League, volunteering with the Humane Society of Ventura County, and recognition as a Las Patronas Auxiliary Debutante. Hanna earned a B.S. in Business from CSU Channel Islands and a J.D. from Chapman University's Fowler School of Law in 2023. She began her career in tenants' rights and personal injury, advocating for clients affected by uninhabitable housing, auto accidents, and premises liability. She brings that same compassion to family law, guiding clients through emotionally challenging matters. Outside work, Hanna enjoys time with family, her animals, and exploring the outdoors.

Welcome

New Attorneys!



CHANNY RUSSELL, ESQ

Channy is a Ventura-based family law litigator with extensive experience throughout Santa Barbara, Santa Maria, and Lompoc. She earned her law degree cum laude from Boston University School of Law, where she was a Fulbright fellow and completed a dual degree in International Relations and Conflict Resolution, after graduating from Washington & Lee University. Practicing family law in California since 2020, Channy has successfully represented hundreds of clients in complex matters involving high-asset estates, business interests, separate property claims, domestic violence allegations, custody disputes, prenuptial agreements, and Marvin claims. A former criminal defense attorney, she is known for untangling complex financial issues and forcefully defending wrongly accused clients. Fluent in Spanish, Channy is an active member of multiple California legal organizations and lives in Santa Barbara with her young daughter.

NEW YEAR, NEW RULES! AN OUTLINE OF THE 2026 CALIFORNIA STATE BAR MCLE REQUIREMENTS

By Christal Joy Porter

It seems like every year there are new additions to the MCLE compliance rules for active State Bar licensees. As outlined below, here are some key requirements and changes that you should be informed about to ensure your active status with the CA State Bar.

REPORTING DEADLINES

Deadlines to report 25 hours [for active licensees w/ few exceptions] of Minimum Continuing Legal Education (MCLE) have been extended to 38-month cycles and are as follows:

- April 1, 2025 (Compliance Group 1)
Last names A - G
- **March 30, 2026 (Compliance Group 3)**
Last names N - Z
- March 30, 2027 (Compliance Group 2)
Last names H - M

After the 38-month cycle, each group returns to the standard 36-month cycle starting March 30 of their respective year and ending the day before the deadline 36 months later.

CREDIT HOURS SPECIFICATIONS

For the compliance period ending March 29, 2026, **25 hours** of MCLE are required, and the following MCLE specifications must be met:

- At least 12.5 credit hours must be Participatory Credit hours
- At least 4 credit hours of Legal Ethics
- At least 2 credit hours of dealing with the recognition and Elimination of Bias - *1 hour of this requirement must focus on Implicit Bias and the promotion of bias-reducing strategies*
- At least 2 credit hours of education addressing Competence - *1 hour of this requirement must focus on Prevention and Detection*
- At least 1 credit hour of education addressing Technology in the practice of law
- At least 1 credit hour of education addressing Civility in the legal profession [Check the State Bar website for opportunities to reduce the required hours based on time spent Inactive]

WHERE TO FIND THE MCLES

If you have not heard, VCBA Barristers is NOT hosting their annual Bridging the Gap MCLE event in 2026, where you could typically load up on all of the special MCLE specifications. [Jury is still out on whether the event will come back in 2027 or in the future.] Below are some options for where you can obtain your MCLE credit hours:

Ventura County Bar Association Library Partnership

Our Ventura County Bar Association has partnered with the Beverly Hills Bar Association. Welcome to VCBA+ which provides access to BHBA's nationally recognized library of 1,000+ hours of multi-state accredited CLEs across 45 practice areas. As a Member Benefit, you can view up to 25 hours of free CLE. This is a great source very entertaining, informative, and relevant MCLEs. Sign up by logging into the MCLE Courses webpage on the VCBA site and create your account.

Ventura County Bar Association Self-Study Program

Our Ventura County Bar Association also has a Self-Study Program that allows you to dive into the archive of past MCLE events, watch at your own pace, and receive MCLE credit. Please note that payment to view past MCLE events will be required. Contact the Ventura County Bar Association at (805) 650-7599 for more information.

Attend Conferences/Symposiums

Legal conferences are always a good way to obtain a deluge of MCLE credits while having a good time, meeting new people, or traveling to a new place. Here is a list of some of the upcoming local Conferences/Symposium:

- **Through the Looking Glass Symposium XXII** hosted by the Conejo Valley Estate Plan Council – January 15, 2026 at Cal Lutheran University Lundring Event Center
- **2026 Annual Privacy Summit** focused on International Arbitration and Privacy Law – February 19-20, 2026 at UCLA Luskin Conference Center

• **2026 Annual Solo and Small Firm Summit** hosted by California Lawyers Association – June 12-13, 2026

• **Inaugural Public Law Conference** for those working in all levels of government – March 19-21, 2026 in San Diego, CA

• **Special Needs Planning Symposium** for professionals who plan for individuals with disabilities and administer special needs trust- February 5-7, 2026 at Meritage Resort and Spa in Napa, CA [Judge Roger L. Lund will be presenting]

• **Consumer Attorneys Association of Los Angeles Vegas Conference** - September 3-6, 2026 at Fontainebleau, Vegas, NV

Continuing Education of the Bar (CEB)

CEB is a great provider for California-specific legal content. They have a host of incredible MCLE courses in all legal practice areas. If you want to dive deep into the CEB MCLE resources, you can purchase the CLEPassport. To find out more information, go to www.ceb.com.

Conclusion

Best of luck to you as we enter another year of the privilege and opportunity to practice law in California! I hope the MCLE requirements allow you to learn and grow in your area of practice while increasing the value you provide to your clients and the community.



Christal Joy Porter, a graduate of Pepperdine University School of Law, is an attorney with Rodnunsky & 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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