



Stephen G. Larson

PARTNER

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Los Angeles

A former U.S. District Judge and co-founding partner of Larson O'Brien LLP, Stephen G. Larson has spent his career at the center of the most high-profile complex civil and white collar criminal matters in the country. With a national reputation in the courtroom as an "even-tempered litigator with a keen mind," he is recognized annually by the *Daily Journal*, California's leading legal newspaper, as one of the "Top 100 Lawyers in California."

Stephen's clients know him as an "exceptionally hard worker" who handles every case on a personal level—the kind of dedicated service and attentive counsel that can be a rare find. Clients turn to Stephen knowing he will have their best interests in mind as he crafts his approach to the case from the first conversation to the optimal result. He uses his deep knowledge of the law, thorough analysis, and aggressive but cogent strategy to deliver justice for his clients. As a prominent litigator aptly described Stephen, "he can talk a dog off a meat truck."

In his over 30 years of practice as a trial and appellate lawyer, Stephen has been lead counsel in scores of federal and state court jury trials and appeals, including before the California Supreme Court and the U.S. Supreme Court. He serves as a trusted advisor to senior executives, prominent domestic and international businesses, public and private companies of all sizes, and other individuals as plaintiffs and defendants in high-stakes civil and commercial disputes. Throughout his broad civil litigation practice, he covers intellectual property, real property and land use, environmental and basic materials, complex contracts and business torts, employment, securities, civil rights, and class action matters across industries ranging from entertainment to technology. In addition, Stephen is frequently engaged as an arbitrator and mediator in complex commercial disputes.

EDUCATION

University of Southern California Gould School of Law, J.D.

Georgetown University, B.S.F.S.

ADMISSIONS

California

District of Columbia

U.S. Supreme Court

U.S. Court of Federal Claims

U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit

U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit

U.S.D.C. Central District of California

U.S.D.C. Eastern District of California

U.S.D.C. Northern District of California

U.S.D.C. Southern District of California

U.S.D.C. District of Columbia

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From investigations to trial, Stephen represents companies, executives, lawyers, doctors, actors, public figures and entities, and boards and committees in white collar criminal matters. He skillfully guides clients through government investigations and successfully defends them against prosecutions related to public corruption, the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA), domestic and international sanctions issues, the False Claims Act (FCA), healthcare laws, and financial controls. His enviable track record includes a mid-trial dismissal of a former agent with the Drug Enforcement Agency charged with conspiracy and fraud, having no charges filed against a doctor following a months-long investigation alleging \$30 million in FCA violations, and a favorable disposition and dismissal of all remaining charges for an expert charged with embezzling millions of dollars of NASA funds. Stephen is currently defending the former University of Southern California water polo coach in the highly publicized "Varsity Blues" college admissions case against racketeering and fraud charges. With extensive experience on both sides of an investigation, Stephen's practice also involves conducting internal investigations, among which was his appointment to monitor the Orange County District Attorney's compliance with a Blue Ribbon commission's recommendations related to jail informants.

Stephen has made prevailing in high-stakes litigation cases at both trial and on appeal a hallmark of his practice. In 2018, Stephen was awarded the *Daily Journal's* California Lawyer Attorneys of the Year (CLAY) Award for his trial advocacy in *People v. Biane et al.*, which former California Attorney General Jerry Brown touted as one of the most significant public corruption matters in California history. After a 10-month trial, Stephen secured a complete defense verdict for real estate developer Jeff Burum, defeating allegations that three county officials took bribes from Mr. Burum in exchange for their approval for a \$102 million settlement of a land dispute. He is now leading the civil rights suit seeking over \$100 million in damages on behalf of Mr. Burum and his company for the retaliatory investigation. Stephen's other recent successes include achieving a \$40 million settlement for the States of Arizona and Oklahoma in a consumer protection laws violation suit against Volkswagen AG, affirming on appeal the dismissal of substantive RICO violation claims against his client, and obtaining multimillion-dollar settlements for a Native American tribe in a lawsuit against the government for mismanaging tribal assets.

Stephen is dedicated to furthering the education of and creating better public systems for practicing and aspiring lawyers, governments, and law enforcement worldwide. He taught law school classes in constitutional law, civil rights law, federal courts, and professional responsibility; and has conducted law enforcement training at the FBI National Academy and overseas on money laundering, asset forfeiture, and U.S. banking regulations. As a member of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit's Jury Instruction Committee while on the bench, Stephen was responsible for drafting and publishing model jury instructions. He was a founding member of the State Department's Public-Private Partnership for Justice Reform in Afghanistan, and he conducted joint training exercises and investigations with foreign law enforcement agencies in Russia, Kazakhstan, Estonia, Latvia, Poland, the Ukraine, and South Korea. Locally, Stephen previously served as chair of the Los Angeles County Blue Ribbon Commission on Public Safety and volunteers his time on non-profit boards.

PRIOR EXPERIENCE

After launching his legal career in private practice, Stephen was appointed to the U.S. Attorney's Office in Los Angeles where he served as chief of the Organized Crime and Racketeering Section. As a prosecutor, he led 24 criminal trials, was responsible for 49 appeals before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, and received the U.S. Department of Justice Director's Award for Superior Performance from Attorney General Janet Reno. Stephen departed the U.S. Attorney's Office for his judicial service in the Central District of California, first as a Magistrate Judge and then as a District Judge upon nomination by President George W. Bush.

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PARTNER

During his nearly 10 years as a federal judge, Stephen adjudicated over a thousand cases—including a number of high-profile ones such as the “Barbie vs. Bratz” copyright infringement dispute between toymakers Mattel and MGA Entertainment—and was designated seven times to serve on the Ninth Circuit. Other noteworthy cases over which he presided include *Siegel v. Warner Bros. Entertainment, Inc.*, which determined the ownership of the copyrights to the iconic comic strip Superman; *United States v. Nazario*, a landmark Military Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Act case involving U.S. Marines accused of manslaughter during the Battle of Fallujah; *United States v. Duro*, in which Stephen blocked the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs’ decade long effort to close down and expel a major migrant worker camp on the Torres Martinez Indian Reservation; and *John Doe v. County of San Bernardino*, which resulted in systematic reform of educational and therapeutic services for disabled youths within the county juvenile hall system.

Prior to co-founding Larson O’Brien in 2016, Stephen was chair of the litigation department at a national Am Law 200 firm and a member of its Executive Committee.

REPRESENTATIVE MATTERS

- Secured a complete defense verdict for the managing partner of Colonies Partners, LP, a real estate development partnership, defeating allegations that three county officials took bribes from the managing partner in exchange for their approval for a \$102 million settlement of a land dispute.
- Obtained multimillion-dollar settlements for the Quapaw Nation and tribe members in a lawsuit spanning 17 years regarding claims that the mismanaged tribal assets.
- Obtained a favorable sole-tax-count, no-custody, no-restitution disposition and the dismissal of all remaining charges for an aerospace economic development expert charged with embezzling millions of dollars in NASA funds in the highly publicized *People v. Shaw*.
- Obtained a complete dismissal of the City of Irvine in two high-profile class action lawsuits regarding the enforcement of anti-camping policies and adequacy of shelters within Orange County.
- Obtained a complete dismissal of 14 felony counts against a client alleging he had engaged in the sale of securities without qualification or exemption.
- In *United States v. Aguilar*, one of only a few FCPA cases to go to trial in the past decade, successfully defeated FCPA and money-laundering charges by securing an order vacating the convictions of Ms. Aguilar.
- Obtained a \$10 million jury verdict and judgment against the Rose Bowl Aquatic Center and in favor of a minor child abused at the defendant’s facilities.
- Successfully represented the states of Arizona and Oklahoma in connection with their efforts to seek recovery following the Volkswagen AG emissions “Diesel Dupe” scandal, obtaining settlements totaling more than \$40 million.
- Won summary judgment in favor of Taco Bell Corp. in a putative class action alleging \$51 million in violations of the Telephone Consumer Protection Act (TCPA).
- Secured a mid-trial dismissal of a federal grand jury’s nine-count indictment against a former special agent of the Drug Enforcement Agency accused of conspiring to commit fraud and making false statements to federal law enforcement officers.
- Affirmed on appeal the dismissal of substantive RICO violation claims against client.

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- Represented the senior executive of international mining company in FCPA joint investigation by the Justice Department and Eastern District of New York, resulting in no charges being filed.
- Secured a dismissal of criminal charges and a civil compromise for an industry-leading industrial materials manufacturer, following an industrial homicide investigation.
- Represented a financial technology company during criminal and civil investigations by several District Attorneys' offices and the United States Attorney, resulting in no charges being filed.
- Represented the relator in a *qui tam* civil FCA matter alleging healthcare fraud, resulting in more than \$60 million in recovery.
- Won a seven-figure judgment for an attorney in a fee dispute arising from the Indian Trust litigation and settlement, following a trial before the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.
- Succeeded in having no charges filed against a doctor following months-long investigation of alleged \$30 million in FCA violations.
- Won three appeals overturning orders granting terminating sanctions in a high-profile wrongful death action against a celebrity drug interventionist, and defeated defendants' motion for summary judgment after remand.
- Represented Arizona voters challenging the constitutionality of unequally populated voting districts created by a state commission, before the U.S. Supreme Court in *Harris v. Arizona Independent Redistricting Commission*.
- Obtained summary judgment for a non-profit organization alleged to have aided and abetted fraud and financial crimes.
- Conducted internal investigations of a retirement pension regarding allegations of executive misconduct.
- Served as the Independent Monitor of the Orange County District Attorney's office, following appointment to that role by the Orange County Board of Supervisors.

ACTIVITIES

- National Community Renaissance®, *Board of Directors*
- Catholic Charities of Los Angeles, *Board of Trustees*
- Pacific Council on International Policy, *Member*
- Los Angeles County Blue Ribbon Commission on Public Safety, *Former Chairman*
- Disability Rights Legal Center, *Former Member of the Board of Directors*
- Federal Bar Association, Inland Empire, *Former Member of the Board of Directors*
- Judge Paul R. Michel Intellectual Property American Inn of Court, *Former Member of the Advisory Board*
- Volunteer Center of Riverside County, *Former Member of the Advisory Board*
- Leo A. Deegan American Inn of Court, *Former Judicial Master*

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AWARDS & RECOGNITION

- *Daily Journal*, "Top 100 Lawyers in California" (2017-2020)
- *The Best Lawyers in America*® for Commercial Litigation and Criminal Defense: White Collar (2015-2021)
- *Benchmark Litigation*, "Litigation Star" (2019-2020)
- *Daily Journal*, "California Lawyer Attorney of the Year (CLAY) Award" (2018)
- *Los Angeles Business Journal*, "LA500: The Most Influential People in L.A." (2016-2020)
- *Los Angeles Business Journal*, "Leaders of Influence: Litigators & Trial Lawyers" (2020)
- *Los Angeles Business Journal*, "Top Litigators & Trial Lawyers" (2018-2019)