Stephen G. Larson

PARTNER

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OFFICE Los Angeles

A former U.S. District Judge, founding partner of the firm, and Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers, Stephen 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 *Chambers USA* and *Daily Journal*, California's leading legal newspaper, as one of the top trial 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."**

Notable Experience and Results

In his more than 30 years of practice as a trial and appellate lawyer, Stephen has been lead counsel in scores of state and federal 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, federal and state public officials, 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 domestic and international complex commercial disputes.

From investigations to trials, arbitrations, and appeals, 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. He has also represented current and former U.S. Senators, U.S.

EDUCATION

- University of Southern California Gould School of Law, J.D.
- Georgetown University, School of Foreign Service, B.S.F.S.

ADMISSIONS

- California
- District of Columbia
- U.S. Supreme Court
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit
- U.S. Court of Federal Claims
- U.S. Court of International Trade
- U.S.D.C. Central District of California
- U.S.D.C. Eastern District

Representatives, Ambassadors, senior White House and Cabinet level officials, U.S. military officers, and senior elected state officials from California, Arizona, Missouri, and Oklahoma in civil and criminal litigation, state and federal grand jury investigations, congressional and other legislative testimony, and US Department of Justice investigations, including matters related to the Foreign Agent Registration Act (FARA), Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) regulations and sanctions, the Presidential Records Act (PRA), and Special Counsel inquiries.

His enviable track record includes across-the-board acquittals for a real estate developer in a high-profile public corruption prosecution; a complete acquittal for a senior military officer in a general courts martial; a mid-trial dismissal of conspiracy and fraud charges against a former supervisory agent with the Drug Enforcement Agency; having no charges filed against a doctor following a months-long investigation alleging $30 million in FCA violations; convincing prosecutors to dismiss outright filed criminal charges in a case involving securities fraud and another involving insurance fraud; and a favorable disposition and dismissal of all remaining charges for an expert charged with embezzling millions of dollars of NASA funds. Stephen recently defended the former University of Southern California water polo coach in the highly publicized "Varsity Blues" college admissions case against fraud charges, for whom he secured a rare order vacating a conviction.

With extensive experience on both sides of an investigation, Stephen's practice also involves conducting internal investigations, including leading an internal investigation of policies, procedures, and practices related to anti-public corruption efforts in an international mining company. Stephen was appointed by Riverside County to investigate social service departments related to highly publicized allegations about the care of the 13 Turpin children after being rescued from their abusive home; by Orange County to independently monitor the Orange County District Attorney's compliance with a Blue Ribbon Commission's recommendations related to jail informants; and by Los Angeles County to serve as chair of its commission on public safety which conducted a review of strategies and consequences of state criminal justice reform.

Stephen has made prevailing in high-stakes litigation cases both at trial and on appeal a hallmark of his practice. In 2018, *Daily Journal* awarded Stephen the "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 the co-managing partner of a real estate developer, defeating allegations that three county officials took bribes from the client in exchange for their approval for a $102 million settlement of a land dispute. Stephen then filed two civil rights suits on behalf of the co-managing partner and his company for the retaliatory investigation, which resulted in a $65 million settlement between the County, the client, and his company in November 2020. 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.

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

PRACTICE AREAS

- Appellate Litigation
- Complex Civil Litigation
- Antitrust and Competition Litigation
- Civil Rights Litigation
- Class Action
- Commercial Litigation
- Environmental, Natural Resource, and Basic Materials Litigation
- Intellectual Property and Patent Litigation
- International Arbitration
- Labor and Employment Litigation and Counseling
- Media and Entertainment Litigation
- Partnership Disputes and Securities Litigation
- Real Estate Litigation
- Trusts, Probate, and Estate Litigation
- Internal Investigations and Compliance
- White Collar Defense and Government Investigations

Professional Impact

Stephen is dedicated to furthering the education of and creating better public systems for practicing and aspiring lawyers, governments, and law enforcement worldwide. He is a formal member of the Inter-American Juridical Committee, one of the principal organs of the Organization of American States which serves as an advisory body on juridical matters to promote the progressive development and codification of international law. 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, 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 nonprofit 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.

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; the United States v. Nazario, a landmark Military Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Act case involving U.S. Marines accused of manslaughter during the Battle of Fallujah; *the 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 the firm in 2016, Stephen was chair of the litigation department at a national Am Law 200 firm and a member of its Executive Committee.

Stephen's Representative Matters

- Retained by Riverside County to conduct an investigation into allegations regarding the treatment of the 13 Turpin children while under the care of the County departments after being rescued from their abusive home in 2018, as well as into the care provided to all children and adults by the County departments.
- Represented clients in an SEC action in federal court after successfully appealing and reversing a $15.5 million disgorgement and penalties judgment against them.
- Retained as trial counsel to represent investors in a class action against Snap Inc., which resulted in a $154 million settlement of all claims against the defendants.
- Obtained complete acquittal at general court-martial trial of a military officer charged with multiple felony violations of the Uniform Code of Military Justice.
- Following the complete defense verdict at trial, obtained a $65 million settlement for a real estate development partnership and its co-managing partner for the retaliatory investigation and malicious prosecution, among other civil rights claims.
- Retained as appellate counsel for the plaintiff in a civil case and successfully argued against the defendants' two attempts to delay trial during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Obtained a $1.3 million settlement for a towing service in a civil rights lawsuit alleging corrupt favoritism and unconstitutional acts by city officials.
- Secured a complete defense verdict for the co-managing partner of 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 federal government 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..
- 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 Aquatics 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.
- Represented the senior executive of an international mining company in FCPA joint investigation by the Justice Department and Eastern District of New York, resulting in no charges being filed.
- Secured 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 a 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 nonprofit 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.

Stephen's Associations

- National Community Renaissance©, *Board of Directors*
- Catholic Charities of Los Angeles, *Board of Trustees*
- Pacific Council on International Policy, *Member*
- International Bar Association, *Member*
- Organization of American States Inter-American Juridical Committee, *Former 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*

Stephen's Awards & Recognitions

- Chambers USA, Litigation: White Collar Crime & Government Investigations Ranking, 2021-2024
- Daily Journal, Top 100 Lawyers in California, 2017-2024
- Daily Journal, Top White Collar Lawyers, 2021-2022
- Daily Journal, California Lawyer Attorney of the Year (CLAY) Award, 2018
- The Best Lawyers in America®, for Appellate, Commercial Litigation, and Criminal Defense: White Collar, 2015-2024
- Benchmark Litigation, White Collar Crime/Investigations Litigator of the Year, 2022
- Benchmark Litigation, Litigation Star, 2019-2024
- The American Lawyer, West Trailblazer, 2022
- The National Law Journal, Elite Boutique Trailblazer, 2022
- Los Angeles Business Journal, LA500: The Most Influential People in L.A., 2016-2023