

Daily Journal

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Top 100 Litigators

Here are the top 100 and how they got there.

Editor's Note

This is a season where talk of change is in the air - hot air, or fresh air - depending on where you stand.

But change is not just the latest buzzword in political rhetoric. It is essential, and it can also be deeply challenging. The lawyers and judges on our Top 100 are acutely aware of this. Through their work, they are shaping our future: what kind of air we will breathe, how we will define the institutions we share, how we will settle our disputes, how this business of law will operate.

We put Chief Justice Ronald George on the cover in recognition of his ongoing leadership of the state's legal community, whether fighting for adequate resources for the courts, better access to justice for those who can't afford it and, this year, his authorship of the state Supreme Court's landmark ruling on same-sex marriage. California was not the first state to legalize such unions, but the high court under Chief Justice George went further than any other in granting sexual orientation the same level of legal protection against bias that was previously reserved for race, religion and gender. The ruling has stirred widespread opposition, as well as admiration.

The legal thunderbolt that George and the other justices threw was crafted from their reading of lessons from the past: They were guided by the court's ruling in *Perez v. Sharp*, which, 60 years ago, legalized interracial marriage in California.

George speaks of traveling with his family, as a child, in the American South, where signs prohibiting African-Americans entrance to businesses made a profound impression. While he has a reputation for caution on the court, George said after the ruling: "I think there are times when doing the right thing means not playing it safe."

On this year's list, you will find others in our community who have the same penchant for boldness and the skill to draw the right lessons from the past to build a strong foundation for the future.

As always, we look forward to hearing from you.

-Martin Berg

Kassia “Kassie” Siegel

Center for Biological Diversity

Joshua Tree

Thanks to the director of the Center for Biological Diversity’s climate program, the polar bear’s struggle in its melting Arctic habitat has become a key symbol of the threats faced from climate change. She spent years in court to force the Bush administration to list the bear under the Endangered Species Act. In May, the officials finally did just that, and the polar bear became the first mammal listed under the act primarily due to the effects of global warming. The listing will likely force federal agencies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions on major projects they approve in order to protect the bear.

