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TOP FORTY UNDER 2022



TRAVIS S. SILVA

AGE: 38

KEKER, VAN NEST & PETERS LLP

SAN FRANCISCO
LITIGATION

A former seventh-grade English teacher, Travis S. Silva believes his experiences in the classroom have had an unlikely impact on his current work with Keker, Van Nest & Peters LLP.

“Teaching really was a lesson in learning how to communicate very clearly and effectively, and those skills translate well from the classroom to working with juries, judges and clients,” the San Francisco attorney said in an interview.

A native of the Bay Area, Silva’s litigation experience has largely revolved around matters concerning his home turf, even allowing him to work with some of his favorite area sports teams.

“I’ve worked for the A’s and the Giants, and it’s really been an exciting thing for me,” he said.

Silva helped defend the San Francisco Giants organization when ballplayer Jonathan “Mac” Williamson attempted to bypass union arbitration requirements in order to sue the team for an on-field injury.

“He had what he thought was kind of a work-around legal theory that would allow him to pursue it in court instead of in arbitration,” Silva said.

“We took the matter to a California state court judge and sought to send the case to labor arbitration and we were successful,” he continued. “We got the case into labor arbitration where it belongs and showed that Mr. Williamson, who was a member of the union, nego-

tiated for various collective bargaining rights and needed to present his case in that forum. So that was an interesting issue and a good win for the hometown team.”

Silva’s cases haven’t all been fun and games, however. His pro bono work, for example, has included cases seeking to reunite families separated by Trump-era zero-tolerance immigration policies in 2018.

In one instance, Silva said, a detained mother was ordered by agents to give her daughter a bath in detention, after which they were forcibly separated.

“All of our families suffered something similar in about six to eight weeks of separation without parents knowing where the child was and the child knowing where the parent was,” Silva said. “So the case was in federal court in Oakland and the judge has rejected the government’s motion to dismiss, and we are in discovery and looking forward to presenting that case at trial.”

In another pro bono matter, Silva and his team joined State Attorney General Rob Bonta in a case brought by San Francisco District Attorney Chesa Boudin to crack down on manufacturers of so-called “ghost guns.”

“They sell their ghost gun kit products without conducting background checks on the people who are buying these things and without putting serial numbers on them, and these products are really scary,” he said.

"I've watched them be assembled from just what looks like a set of parts, and less than half an hour later, the person assembling them can actually use them to fire a bullet," Silva continued.

Silva and his team have sued three ghost gun manufacturers in the San Francisco Superior Court, filing a motion for preliminary injunction to halt sales. That motion remains pending.

Silva said that while he enjoys presenting cases before judges and juries, he also derives satisfaction from being able to provide advice to clients.

"It doesn't really matter if it's the CEO of a life sciences company or the general counsel of a professional sports team or a pro bono client who's crossed the border and then faced family separation policies," he said. "Clients come

to us when they have tough cases and want or need advice, and it's fun, rewarding and fulfilling to be able to listen to someone, understand their goals and provide them with advice."

— SKYLER ROMERO