

Daily Journal

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Top Women Lawyers 2018

*The Daily Journal's Annual List of
Leading Women Lawyers in California*

Susan J. Harriman

A top litigator and Kecker partner, Harriman is no stranger to jumping into cases on the fly. “We try so many last-minute cases and it’s fun that way,” she said. An upcoming labor dispute in federal court in Oregon is a current example of her enthusiastic approach to complex matters involving several complicating factors.

“The case has been going on for years, but we got called in last fall to work with previous counsel at trial,” Harriman said. She’s lead trial counsel representing the International Longshore and Warehouse Union and two of its locals against a Philippines-owned company operating container terminals at the Port of Portland on the Columbia River, ICTSI Oregon Inc. The company is seeking more than \$100 million in damages following three years of bitter labor strife.

“I don’t usually do labor law,” Harriman said. The case stems from company allegations that her union clients engaged in deliberate work stoppages and slowdowns. The union contends that ICTSI promoted serious safety violations and created a miserable working environment.

“The plaintiff wants to blame everything on the union. They want to destroy the union,” she said. “And we’ll be trying the



case in an atmosphere of one-sided press stories against us. The plaintiff had much better PR than my clients did. The press has been very anti-union.”

Adding to the heavy lift she’s preparing for are several rulings adverse to her clients by the National Labor Relations Board. “We’re stuck with those, but I enjoy the challenge,” Harriman said. “Our focus will

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Practice Type:
Commercial litigation

be on the proximate cause of the slowdowns. We think the company’s own actions — especially its lack of concern about safety issues — slowed down production. We need to show that any isolated slowdowns were due to workers’ concerns and care for their safety. And whatever slowdowns there were did not lead to any damages.”

The case is *ICTSI Oregon Inc. v. ILWU and Locals 8 and 40*, 3:12-cv-01058-51 (D. Ore., filed June 13, 2012). “We’ve had no discovery yet, so there’s a lot to do,” Harriman said. A two-week jury trial is set for March 2019. “It’s truly wonderful to represent hardworking longshore folks. How can you not enjoy this? We who try cases have the greatest job around.”

— John Roemer