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TOP 100 LAWYERS IN CALIFORNIA 2017

LITIGATION

John W. Keker

KEKER, VAN NEST & PETERS LLP | SAN FRANCISCO

SPECIALTY: WHITE COLLAR CRIMINAL DEFENSE, COMMERCIAL LITIGATION

A giant among litigators, Keker has never been afraid to take on big cases — or towering figures. The nation first found that out in the 1980s when Keker prosecuted Lt. Col. Oliver North over the Iran-Contra scandal. It was reminded again after Donald J. Trump was elected president.

Keker argued on behalf of the County of Santa Clara in a case that led to a preliminary injunction against Trump's executive order that would have precluded sanctuary cities from receiving some forms of federal funding.

"They've never appealed," he said. "We won it early on and a lot of other courts have followed that ruling since."

"We established that the president does not have the power to control the purse outside of congressional authorization, which is pretty obvious," he said.

Since its founding, Keker's firm, which bolsters an impressive roster of first-rate litigators, has always handled a significant number of pro bono matters alongside to its docket of major civil and criminal matters for corporate clients.

Some of the firm's attorneys began

representing children who fled violence in other countries to enter the U.S. a few years ago and the firm has embraced immigration work as a pillar of its pro bono service.

Keker is also representing a prominent immigrant in a non-pro bono case that goes to trial in February. The client is a Bangladeshi immigrant, the former chief financial officer of Autonomy, a company that sold itself to Hewlett-Packard Co. in an ill-fated deal that was followed by a drop in HP's value.

"The market reacted badly to the purchase and to other things. People behind the merger were fired," he said. "New management at HP a year later claimed they were defrauded."

Autonomy was the biggest company on the London Stock Exchange before the deal was made. HP was able to convince the federal government to bring a criminal case. Keker said the allegation was dubious to begin with, but the fact that the government is only attempting to punish the one non-white person involved in the deal is even more egregious.

"They say 15 people are responsible



for what they say is a crime. They only indicted one guy, the Bangladeshi," he said. "It's an outrageously unfair singling out of a person."

— Joshua Sebold