

Daily Journal

COVER STORY

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2006

TOP 100 — CALIFORNIA'S LEADING LAWYERS

Editor's Note

As you might imagine, putting together this list is more art than science.

It starts with questions. What were the big issues of the year that affected people's lives across the state, and who were the lawyers and judges who helped shape how those issues played out? Who is working behind the scenes influencing the political debate or the profile of the state's judiciary? Have we under-represented criminal defense lawyers? How do we measure their broader impact? How about general counsel? How about lawyers in the Central Valley?

Our list is based on our reporting, day in and day out, on the legal community. It's the product of many late nights' worth of arguing and probing. The reporters and editors debate over pizza, switch positions over coffee, and nibble potato chips and M&Ms while they compare candidates. When the debating gets really tough, we haul out the stash of dark chocolate.

Through these discussions we hone our sense of what's happening in the state and which lawyers are at the center of the action. We often surprise ourselves with what we find. For instance, it's not always about who won in the big case or the big issue. Sometimes, the losing side is the one that's stubbornly tugging on

the loose thread that gathers into the ball of yarn that weaves into the fabric of our lives. Sometimes, it's that lonely, insistent voice, ignored in the beginning, that brings home the uncomfortable truth we eventually can't ignore.

Other times, it's not such a difficult call: this year no one can ignore the central role prosecutors are playing in unraveling corporate abuses, exposing some of the more unsavory practices in entertainment litigation or raising questions about the effectiveness of the three-strikes criminal sentencing law.

So welcome to our list.

— Martin Berg

Defending Champions



Photo by S. Todd Rogers

John W. Keker

Partner
Keker & Van Nest
San Francisco

Keker helped high-profile lawyers Bert Fields and William Lerach stay out of prosecutors' cross hairs when their names surfaced in federal criminal investigations.



Photo by Xiang Xing Zhou

Jan Nielsen Little

Partner
Keker & Van Nest
San Francisco

Little represents Stephanie Jensen, the former Brocade Communications human resources manager who was one of the first people indicted in the stock options backdating investigation.

The Scholars



Photo by Xiang Xing Zhou

Mark Lemley

Of Counsel
Keker & Van Nest
San Francisco

Professor
Stanford University
School of Law
Palo Alto

In the closely-watched eBay v. MercExchange case, intellectual property expert Lemley wrote an amicus brief to the U.S. Supreme Court successfully arguing that judges should not grant injunctions on an "automatic" basis, even if the court concludes that a company's patents have been infringed.