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CODY GRAY

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SAN FRANCISCO

Cody Gray has spent a decade handling white-collar criminal defense and complex commercial litigation at Keker, Van Nest & Peters LLP. Before law school, he worked at a civil legal aid nonprofit and on Capitol Hill, experiences that showed him how lawyers can improve lives at individual and systemic levels.

His mother, a clinical psychologist, influenced his path to criminal law. Gray watched her counsel clients through traumatic problems and found similar purpose in white—collar work. "Nothing energizes and motivates me like a complex, high-stakes battle against the government, where you must be creative, master the chessboard and fight tooth-and-nail to safeguard your client's reputation, business and freedom," Gray said.

At Keker, Gray works alongside partners including John Keker, Jan Little, Bob Van Nest and Elliot Peters. Gray learned different lessons from them. Keker and Little demonstrated courage and tenacity, teaching him that arguments sometimes require multiple attempts to gain traction. Van Nest showed him the importance of straightforward narratives. Peters taught him to try the actual case unfolding in the courtroom rather than the one planned beforehand.

Gray maintains close relationships with his former judges: Chief Judge Richard Seeborg of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California and Judge Milan D. Smith Jr. of the Ninth Circuit. Both taught him precision in legal writing and how to balance legal work with other aspects of life.

One of Gray's recent victories came when he and his colleagues secured complete acquittal for Coachella Valley real estate developer John Wessman, ending a nearly decade-long investigation. Prosecutors alleged Wessman paid hundreds of thousands of dollars to Palm Springs' then-mayor in exchange for votes on a downtown redevelopment project.

"I successfully excluded multiple prosecution witnesses and adduced key testimony on cross-examination, establishing that the entire city council supported the project — and thus the mayor's votes were not needed — negating the prosecution's theory of the case," Gray said.

The case presented constant challenges, he said. A dismissed case was reinstated on appeal. A co-defendant became a cooperator, changing case dynamics. The venue and jury pool shifted unexpectedly. During jury selection, the remaining co-defendant pled guilty amid massive press coverage, requiring Gray to fight to keep the guilty plea from evidence.

"At trial, the judge initially blocked us from introducing records showing that the votes our client supposedly 'bought' were, in fact, unanimous," Gray said. "So, we had to get creative on cross and find ways to make the same points when examining city council witnesses."

Gray currently represents a children's hospital challenging a Department of Justice subpoena targeting records related to gender-affirming care for transgender youth. The hospital moved to quash the subpoena, which Gray argues intimidates his client from providing lawful care. "The case is important because it will help define how far prosecutors can stretch statutes like the federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act," Gray said.

He also represents the founder and former CEO of autonomous vehicle company Cruise LLC in state and federal regulatory investigations following an incident involving a Cruise vehicle, and in a securities class action regarding the safety and capabilities of Cruise's self-driving technology. The matters involve novel issues that could shape how the industry is regulated.

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