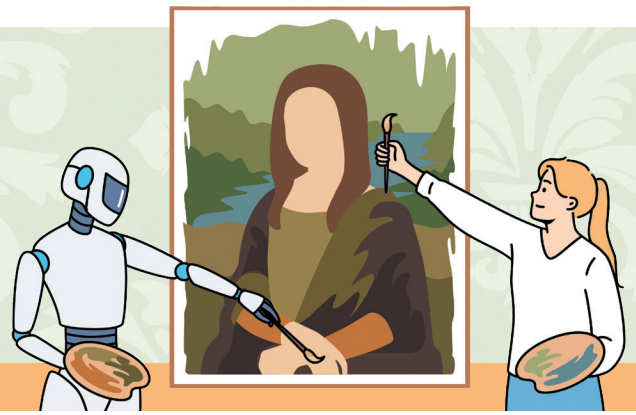
Supplement to the Los Angeles and San Francisco
Daily Journal
MAY 20, 2026

TOP INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY LAWYERS 2026

HONORING TOP ATTORNEYS WORKING IN PATENT, TRADEMARK AND COPYRIGHT LAW





SHARIF E. JACOB

KEKER, VAN NEST & PETERS LLP

SAN FRANCISCO

Sharif Jacob arrived at Keker, Van Nest & Peters LLP in 2008 with an interest in cutting-edge technology that has shaped his practice ever since. He carries one of the firm's busiest IP dockets, with active matters spanning patent, trademark and trade secret disputes for clients that include Netflix, Meta, Instacart, Hewlett Packard Enterprise, Perplexity AI, MongoDB and Silicon Valley Bank's successor trust.

The matter Jacob points to as a turning point came in patent litigation Broadcom brought against Netflix. Broadcom claimed that a single patent entitled it to more than a billion dollars in damages. The patent described "a network adapted to process data," which Jacob's team argued was nothing more than the abstract idea of routing information. U.S. District Judge James J. Donato agreed, tracing the concept back to at least 1878 and comparing it to the work of a telephone switchboard operator. After he granted summary judgment, 85% of Broadcom's requested damages evaporated, and Broadcom stipulated to dismiss the remaining patents.

Jacob's current portfolio reflects IP practice's growing intersection with emerging technology. He is defending Meta in a five-patent case asserting that its artificial intelligence voice recognition technology infringes patents held by Dialect and representing Hewlett Packard Enterprise against claims brought by Memray MT LLC, "a litigation-focused U.S. subsidiary of a Korean technology company." *Memray v. HPE*, 2:25-cv-970 (E.D. Tex., filed Sept. 22, 2025). Jacob is also defending Perplexity AI in a dispute with Reddit over alleged data scraping.

On the trademark side, Jacob represents SVB Financial Trust in a case alleging that First Citizens improperly continued using the "SVB" name, logo and domain after acquiring Silicon Valley Bank's assets from the FDIC without acquiring the underlying intellectual property. *SVB Financial Trust v. First-Citizens Bank and Trust Company*, 3:25-cv-02267 (N.D. Cal., filed March 5, 2025). Lastly, Jacob is representing MongoDB in asserting patent, trademark dilution, and false advertising claims against *FerretDB. MongoDB, Inc. v. FerretDB Inc.*, 1:25-cv-00641 (D. Del., filed May 23, 2025).

Earlier this year, Jacob "quickly dispatched a competitor suit against Instacart asserting trademark infringement claims against its new snack delivery application, Fizz," defeating a preliminary injunction motion and moving to dismiss before securing a favorable settlement in December 2025.

In his pro bono practice, he is leading a team challenging an executive order prohibiting relatives of service members from receiving gender-affirming care under TRICARE. *Doe v. Department of Defense*, 8:25-cv-02947 (D. Md., filed Oct. 29, 2025).

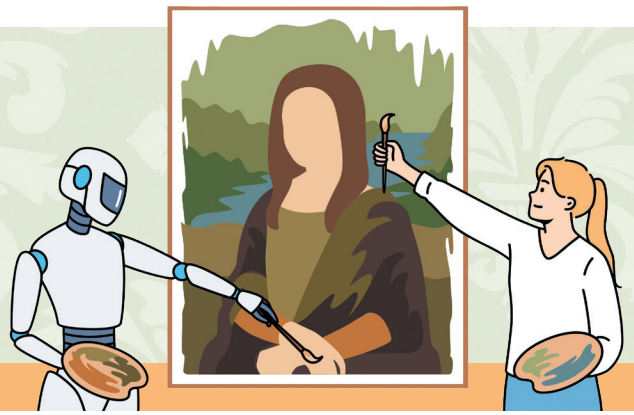
Jacob's read on the litigation environment is unsparing: "Plaintiffs pursuing patent litigation currently have the wind at their backs. IPRs have lost their utility because of the recent increase in discretionary denials. And the Federal Circuit has become much less involved in policing forum shopping." His conclusion: "aggressive, early motions combined with a winning trial strategy are as important as ever."

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MICHELLE YBARRA

KEKER, VAN NEST & PETERS LLP

SAN FRANCISCO

Michelle Ybarra did not come from a family of lawyers. The granddaughter of farmers who never finished high school, she grew up hearing that she should pursue law for a practical reason: she always had a sassy retort. Nearly 18 years into her career, Ybarra has built a practice at the cutting edge of intellectual property litigation, representing clients in cases that are rewriting the rules of copyright, patent and right-of-publicity law.

Her path to IP began at the University of Chicago Law School, where she found herself drawn into debates about whether emerging technologies — virtual worlds, 3D printing — demanded new legal frameworks or simply new applications of old ones. "I loved those conversations and the way they challenged my thinking," Ybarra said, "which is probably why I find myself an IP lawyer today."

That disposition has proved well-suited to a moment when courts are confronted daily with technologies that resist easy doctrinal classification. A recurring challenge across her matters has been translation: taking a description of a platform, an algorithm, or a training dataset and rendering it comprehensible to a judge or jury.

"My job is not just to understand the technology, but translate it into clear arguments the courts and a jury can engage with — in other words, effective storytelling," she said. "In my experience, outcomes often turn on that translation as much as on the legal merits themselves."

The most consequential of her current matters is the copyright MDL against OpenAI. In re: OpenAI Copyright Infringement Litigation, 25-MD-3143 (S.D.N.Y., filed April 11, 2025).

Ybarra has played a leadership role for two years, developing arguments about foundational model training, transformative use and the application of copyright doctrine to generative AI at scale. "The cases raise fundamental questions about how existing legal frameworks apply to foundational model training, transformative use and one of the most consequential technologies of our time," she said.

Also active is a right-of-publicity case involving allegations that an AI system generated a synthetic voice in the likeness of a public figure. *Greene v. Google LLC*, 5:23-cv-03613 (N.D. Cal., filed Aug. 5, 2023).

Among her recent conclusions, a defense win in *Consumeron, LLC v. Maplebear Inc. d/b/a Instacart*, 1:21-cv-01147 (D. Del., filed Aug. 6, 2021), stands out. Consumeron brought four patents directed at core features of Instacart's platform. The PTAB found all challenged claims unpatentable in February 2024, and the Federal Circuit affirmed in 2026, canceling every asserted claim.

Ybarra sees a structural mismatch at the heart of IP practice in California: the law cannot keep pace with the technology it is asked to govern. "Litigation remains an important tool for rights holders, but it is expensive, slow and may not provide comprehensive resolution for issues that arise across an entire industry," she said. In the meantime, rights holders are left managing a parallel track — pursuing litigation while adapting their business strategies to a legal landscape still taking shape.

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