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California Powerhouse: Keker Van Nest & Peters

By **Hailey Konnath**

Law360 (September 4, 2025, 4:04 PM EDT) -- California-based Keker Van Nest & Peters LLP's trial attorneys secured high-profile wins for a variety of big-name clients, including Netflix and Sutter Health, while also representing OpenAI in closely watched litigation over copyright fair use in generative artificial intelligence, earning the firm a spot among Law360's 2025 Regional Powerhouses.



The 138-lawyer trial firm, founded in 1978, works with clients nationwide, but has just one office in San Francisco where its lawyers regularly work together in person. That "in-person, one-roof aspect" is one of the things that sets the firm apart, according to Steven Ragland, a partner and associate general counsel at Keker.

"It really improves the way we handle our cases and interact with each other," Ragland said. "That aspect of having one office and people who actually come in is important to who we are."

Another thing that differentiates Keker from competitors is the wide array of matters its lawyers handle.

"We do all consider ourselves generalists," said Erin Meyer, another Keker partner. "Because we're generalists and we're able to zoom out that way, it gives us a real advantage in not looking at cases or looking at our trial work through too narrow of a lens."

In April, Keker helped Netflix defeat allegations from Broadcom that the streaming giant infringed 17 patents, successfully getting 13 of the patents invalidated by either the California federal court overseeing the litigation or by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. In January, U.S. District Judge James Donato held that a claim for one of the remaining patents was invalid because it covered a "familiar concept rooted in history," a finding that slashed Broadcom's requested damages by 85%, according to Keker.

Sharif Jacob, a Keker partner who's worked with Netflix for over a decade, said that summary judgment ruling was noteworthy because Broadcom was seeking billions of dollars and claimed that the patent covered all video streaming.

"So anybody who's streaming out there was allegedly subject to this patent," Jacob said. "And what we said is there was nothing new about this patent. This patent was an abstract idea that was nothing more

than figuring out how to route information through a network. And Judge Donato agreed."

Broadcom eventually agreed to dismiss claims stemming from the three remaining patents in the dispute.

The firm also successfully defended Sutter Health in a $519 million whistleblower suit accusing the healthcare system of committing insurance fraud. The whistleblowers, Dr. Gregory Duncan and patient Gary Hulbert, had claimed that Sutter's anesthesiologists unnecessarily performed nerve-block procedures in operating rooms, and that Sutter also provided and billed for unnecessary recovery room care.

After a seven-week bench trial, a California state judge held that Duncan and Hulbert hadn't shown that Sutter's billing practices were fraudulent or that payors expected to be charged differently, according to the firm.

Jacob, who served as lead trial counsel for Sutter, said the case took aim at a "fundamental precept impacting every healthcare provider: Can a third party second-guess the good-faith medical decisions of treating physicians and, in doing so, state a fraud claim?"

"All the care they were challenging, every drop of it, had been ordered by physicians, surgeons and anesthesiologists," Jacob said.

He said the win was important because "you don't want doctors to have to sit around and worry, 'Oh, can I give this patient the care I actually think the patient needs? Because if I do, somebody five years later is going to accuse me of having committed fraud?'"

On top of that, Keker landed a complete defense verdict on behalf of cybersecurity company Fortinet in a $140 million fraud and breach of contract case brought by customer outsourcing firm Alorica.

Meyer, who worked on the Fortinet case, said the firm was hired in February for a May trial. She described it as a "classic" Keker case of "coming in and putting together a trial team and being completely ready for trial within a matter of months."

"That is one of the things that sets us apart," Meyer said.

In the ongoing OpenAI case, a Keker team is helping the company fight novel copyright infringement claims from authors, publishers and media organizations claiming their works were illegally used to train the company's ChatGPT program. In April, the firm convinced the U.S. Judicial Panel on Multidistrict Litigation to consolidate more than a dozen cases in the dispute.

The MDL, which is centralized in the Southern District of New York, raises "really interesting and novel questions about copyright law as it pertains to AI companies and the development of large language models," according to Nicholas S. Goldberg, a partner and one of the Keker attorneys representing OpenAI.

Beyond AI, Goldberg said he's also seeing a lot of interest from clients in antitrust and competition law, and not just traditional Sherman Act-type claims. He said he's also watching the growing media market for college athletics, particularly for football, where it remains to be seen how money is going to be distributed to both schools and athletes after the NCAA struck a deal that will for the first time provide

for revenue sharing with student athletes.

Keker also handles criminal cases, which is "sort of a rarity" for firms that are also tackling complex civil cases, according to Ragland. Ragland was part of the Keker team that secured the acquittal of Coachella Valley real estate developer John Wessman, who was accused of bribery. The criminal case against Wessman spanned eight years and resulted in 10 not guilty verdicts returned by a Riverside County Superior Court jury in June.

Ragland said handling criminal and civil matters makes him better at both.

"I'm a better civil lawyer having done criminal work and a better criminal lawyer, especially in a case that involves complex financial transactions and things like that, having done civil litigation," he said.

Another aspect that sets the firm apart, according to Jacob, is its low associates-to-partners ratio.

"What that means is everybody plays an important role in the case, and everybody has accountability for the strategy," he said.

Logistically, it means that partners are involved in the day-to-day management of cases and that associates are empowered to step up and contribute to case strategy, he said.

"That collaborative environment creates a much better product for our clients," Jacob said. "What we don't do is have a model where there are 13 layers between me and the person who originated the work product."

Looking to the future, the firm expects to continue handling increased demand for work in the AI space, according to Jacob. Ragland noted that Keker also took a stand against President Donald Trump's executive orders targeting law firms and is representing individuals taken into custody by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement after appearing for regular, court-ordered check-ins for their asylum proceedings.

"That sort of work has actually led to increased business from clients who want to hire lawyers who fight and who will fight for them," Ragland said.

Meyer noted that the ICE office is a block away from the Keker office, "so this is hitting really close to home for us." She has a long history of immigration work but said "it's all really new" to be filing habeas petitions and temporary restraining order motions to get people out of detention "as soon as possible."

Both Meyer and Goldberg said working at Keker means working somewhere "that has a soul."

"It's a place where the people are the reflection of the firm," Goldberg said. He said the firm is made up of "an incredible group of talented, smart people, but people who are kind and who care about others, not just as lawyers, but as individuals."

–Additional reporting by Rae Ann Varona, Elliot Weld, Dorothy Atkins and Ryan Boysen. Editing by Michael Watanabe.

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