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TOP WOMEN LAWYERS 2025



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LITIGATION

SAN FRANCISCO

Jan Nielsen Little has spent nearly 44 years practicing law, with 38 of those years at Keker, Van Nest & Peters, focusing on white collar criminal defense and complex commercial litigation.

After graduating from law school, she helped run a post-conviction legal services office. Little initially served as a public corruption prosecutor at the Department of Justice for four years before moving to San Francisco and transitioning to criminal defense work.

Her current caseload includes federal criminal investigations across multiple states and industries.

"My most significant current criminal matters are federal criminal investigations pending around the country, including in California, New Jersey and New York, involving industries ranging from mobile gaming to alcohol distribution to telecommunications to FinTech," Little said.

She is also representing Silicon Valley Bank Financial Group in a high-profile civil case against the FDIC. The bank's parent company is suing for the return of $1.9 billion in deposited funds following the bank's closure in March 2023. *SVB Financial Trust v. FDIC*, 23-cv-06543 (N.D. Cal., Dec. 19, 2023); *SVB Financial Trust v. FDIC*, 24-CV-01321 (N.D. Cal., March 5, 2024).

"The FDIC refused to return these deposited funds, despite the Treasury Secretary's invocation of the 'systemic risk exception' promising to give all depositors 'full access' to their deposited funds," Little explained.

Pre-indictment criminal investigations present unique challenges, requiring custom approaches for each case.

"Pre-indictment criminal investigations are challenging because the government conducts its work largely in secret, and there is no set schedule or standard playbook," Little said.

In civil litigation, managing massive amounts of information is often the biggest hurdle.

"It is not uncommon to have cases with tens of millions of documents. One needs to figure out case themes early, in order to separate the wheat from the chaff and focus on which evidence really matters," Little said

Throughout her career, Little has observed fewer cases going to trial. "Criminal defendants risk longer prison sentences by taking their cases to trial rather than accepting a plea deal. Civil defendants similarly find that a settlement is preferable to the tremendous costs of a trial."

Looking ahead, Little remains watchful of potential shifts in criminal prosecution priorities under the current administration, noting that the Department of Justice's announced enforcement priorities don't seem to emphasize white collar crimes.

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