

Laura Leigh Geist

Partner



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Overview

Laura Geist is a member of Dentons' Litigation and Dispute Resolution practice. Her focus is on Commercial Litigation, specializing in consumer class actions and defense of Consumer Legal Remedies Act (CLRA) and Unfair Competition and Unfair Business Practices (UCL).

She is active in life insurance and financial services litigation. Her practice includes defense of rising InsurTech and FinTech companies as well as Fortune 500 companies in consumer claims regarding loss of insurance, policy pricing, Cost of Insurance, sales practices, and consumer fraud. Laura has extensive trial and arbitration experience including Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA) arbitrations. Laura's practice includes the defense of parallel regulatory and governmental actions to civil litigation and advice under the new Department of Labor Fiduciary Rule.

Laura's practice includes risk consulting and litigation for emerging industries, technology companies and start-ups, including market leaders in the cannabis industry. Laura has defended countless national and statewide class actions involving the Truth in Lending Act (TILA), the Unruh Act, the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO), advertising and marketing claims under the Stored Communications Act (SCA), California Invasion of Privacy Act (CIPA), State and Federal Wiretap Acts, the Telephone and Consumer Protection Act (TCPA), and the Song-Beverly Credit Card Act.

Laura is known as a passionate advocate immersed in the business objectives of her clients.

Experience

- Obtained trial victory in life insurance case disputing US\$7.5 million death benefit based on failure to prove "due proof of death."
- Defeated class certification, affirmed on appeal, in a federal, nationwide purported US\$200 million "junk fax" class action under the Telephone and Consumer Protection Act.
- Obtained trial verdict for an insurance client in a purported US\$250 million class action, finding that a premium finance billing plan did not violate the Truth in Lending Act, the Unruh Act or various provisions of the California Insurance Code or the Business and Professions Code section 17200.

- Represented a financial services client in a successful resolution of action by Minnesota’s state attorney general involving alleged sales practices.
- Obtained for client, at the pleading stage, dismissal of a purported class action against Nutraceutical company claiming violations of the California Consumers Legal Remedies Act (CLRA) and consumer fraud under Business and Professions Code sections 17200 and 17500, et seq. (UCL).
- Received a jury verdict and multi-million dollar judgment on behalf of an insurer for insurance fraud, including a criminal restitution order against insured.
- Defended a nationwide purported class action alleging improper crediting practices and violation of standard non-forfeiture laws against an index annuity client; the case was dismissed with prejudice at the class certification stage.
- Obtained a temporary restraining order on behalf of health care client for board misconduct and successfully negotiated the resolution of managed care contract dispute.
- Obtained dismissal of 15 vocational schools and defeated a nationwide class action based on claims related to school accreditation; negotiated the resolution of consumer fraud claims premised on value of an educational program.

Recognition

Honors and Awards

- BTI Client Service All-Star for Litigation and Dispute Resolution, 2016, 2019 and 2020
- Named a 2019 Acritas Star – independently rated lawyer
- Individually recognized by clients in the Acritas Star™ Lawyer report in 2017 as a winning lawyer in a survey of more than 3,000 general counsel and other senior leaders at legal departments around the world. Praised by clients as "creative, responsive and really understands our company and culture."
- Top 100 National Litigators by Corporate Counsel, *Law360*, 2013 and 2014
- Super Lawyer distinction in Business Litigation/Class Action, *Law & Politics*, 2011–2018
- Rising Stars distinction in Business Litigation, Class Action/Mass Torts and Insurance Coverage, *Law & Politics*, 2008 and 2009

Insights

- Co-author, "Life Insurance and Annuities Class Actions" chapter in *A Practitioner’s Guide to Class Actions* (2d Ed.), ABA Publishing, 2017
- Co-author, "Are you covered?" Intelligent Insurer, Summer 2014, an article that explores the complex and emerging issue of cyber insurance coverage
- Co-author, "California Consumer Protection Law - Standing And Equity: What Role do Materiality, Causation And Reliance Have Post Tobacco II And Is There A place For Fairness?," ALI-ABA Conference on Insurance and Financial Services Litigation, Washington, DC, May 5, 2011

Activities and Affiliations

Presentations

- Panelist, "California Anti-Lapse Statutes and Litigation" Association of Life Ins. Counsel, August 19, 2020
- Panelist, "Cannabis in the Age of COVID-19 on Handling Litigation Risks", May 7, 2020
- Speaker, "AI, blockchain, smart contracts - technological revolutions touching the insurance industry," Gotham Insurance Symposium 2019
- Speaker, "Ethics for In-House Counsel: Staring Down A Changing Landscape of 'Work' Presenting Ethical and Practical Challenges Related to Artificial Intelligence," Courageous Counsel, Chicago, January 30, 2019
- Speaker, "Emerging Technology in the Practice of Law: Be Aware and Be Effective," Dentons' San Francisco CLE for In-House Counsel, January 23, 2019
- Speaker, "Class Action Trends," Dentons Gotham Insurance Symposium, New York City, October 25, 2018
- Speaker, "DOL Fiduciary Rule", Compliance & Ethics Forum for Life Insurers (CEFLI), Webinar, July 2017
- Speaker, "Cost of Insurance: Key Considerations and the Next Generation of Litigation", Association of Life Insurance Counsel (ALIC) Annual Meeting, May 2017
- Participant, " Don't Call Me, I'll Call You: Navigating TCPA Compliance and Class Actions ", Dentons Webinar, August 4, 2016
- In-House Counsel CLE Seminar- California Litigation Trends in Privacy and Cybersecurity and the Application of Global Privilege, San Jose, CA
- Women, Influence & Power in Law Conference
- Heartland Insurance Symposium
- CLE Seminar for In-House Counsel - San Francisco, CA and St. Louis, MO
- Association of California Insurance Companies
- ALI-CLE, Insurance and Financial Services Litigation
- The Financial Planning Association of Silicon Valley
- Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA)
- Federation of Defense and Corporate Counsel
- The Association of Defense Counsel
- Defense Research Institute
- California Property Forum

Memberships

- Earl Warren American Inn of Court, Alameda County
- Junior League of Oakland-East Bay, Sustainer
- Association of Life Insurance Counsel (ALIC), ABA House of Delegate

Areas of focus

Practices

- Class Action Defense

- Commercial Litigation
- Employment Disputes
- Litigation and Dispute Resolution
- Product Liability and Complex Torts
- Sales Practices

Industry sectors

- Financial Institutions
- Financial Products Litigation
- Insurance
- Insurance Litigation and Arbitration
- Investment Banks and Broker Dealers
- Life Insurance and Annuities
- Sales Practices Litigation
- Insurance Regulation
- Captive Insurance Services
- Excess and Surplus Lines Insurance Compliance
- Insurance Privacy

Issues and opportunities

- US Telephone Consumer Protection Act (TCPA)
- Cannabis in the United States

Education

- Santa Clara University School of Law, 1995, JD, *magna cum laude*
- Pepperdine University, 1992, BA

Admissions and qualifications

- California
- US District Court for the Central District of California
- US District Court for the Northern District of California
- US District Court for the Southern District of California