

Daily Journal

SEPTEMBER 27, 2011

TOP 100 LAWYERS IN CALIFORNIA

EDITORS' NOTE

From the mortgage crisis to the Gulf oil spill to virtually every major intellectual property dispute, California lawyers are playing leading roles. But they don't just clean up big messes. They secure funding and regulatory approval for cutting-edge developments in water, energy, technology and biotechnology that are the promise of the future.

We aim for this list to be a kaleidoscope of the California legal scene. There are divorce attorneys and public finance lawyers, prosecutors and criminal defenders and much, much more.

We reviewed hundreds of nominations from members of the legal community and from our own editors and reporters to compile this list. It is never an easy task — the list isn't long enough — but it is fun. Read on. We know you'll enjoy learning about these people as much as we did.

— The Editors

JENNIFER L. KELLER



JENNIFER L. KELLER

Keller Rackauckas LLP
Irvine

Practice type: Litigation
Specialty: Complex business
litigation and criminal defense

Keller has found herself in much higher demand since helping MGA Entertainment Inc. win a knockdown, drag-out intellectual property brawl against toy giant Mattel Inc. over MGA's famous Bratz dolls.

She said she's been getting "quite a few calls" since April asking that she take cases. That's when after coming into the case at the last minute, she persuaded a Santa Ana-based federal jury to reject Mattel's claims that MGA stole its idea for the billion-dollar Bratz line and award MGA \$88 million on allegations that Mattel made off with her client's trade secrets. In August, Keller's arguments also helped persuade U.S. District Judge David O. Carter to order Mattel to pay MGA an additional \$85 million in punitive damages and nearly \$140 million in attorney fees and costs. *Bryant v. Mattel Inc.*, 04-9049 (C.D. Cal., filed 2004).

But Keller, who long has been known for a string of big criminal defense wins, said she isn't using her newfound civil trial notoriety — two years ago, her first civil plaintiff's case ended in a \$350 million business fraud win — to dramatically expand her practice.

"I don't want to get involved in a large volume of cases," she said. "I'm very picky — I'd rather be involved with a smaller number of cases" with high potential damages in which the client has "truly been wronged."

Keller, who has tried more than 200 criminal jury trials over her 33-year career, credited the MGA win to a combination of factors. Those include working round-the-clock after getting the case and having stronger evidence than MGA had in the first trial, including testimony that Mattel employed a secret "market intelligence team" to spy on MGA. She said she also got a lot of help from colleagues in her four-person firm and from co-counsel with Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP, including partners Annette L. Hurst and Thomas S. McConville.

But Keller said one of the biggest ingredients for her success was connecting with the jury.

"If you can break down barriers between you and the jurors and connect with them emotionally so they trust you and like you and feel they'd like you as a friend, then you're nine-tenths of the way home," she said.

Big matters: Keller plans to join Los Angeles attorney Maxwell M. Blecher in representing MGA in a trial expected next year of an MGA lawsuit accusing Mattel of antitrust violations. She also expects to be co-counsel for MGA with Claremont attorney Michael J. Bidart in an upcoming trial of a suit in which the toy-maker contends its insurers refused to pay a portion of its legal fees.

— Jason W. Armstrong