

NEWS RELEASE

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7 month long **Colonies Corruption Trial** **Ends in** **Not Guilty Verdict**

IRVINE, CA, AUGUST 29, 2017 --- After a marathon trial that lasted nearly nine months, Rancho Cucamonga developer Jeff Burum was found not guilty in San Bernardino Superior Court on charges of aiding and abetting bribery in an alleged scheme to get county approval of a \$102 million court settlement in favor of a developer.

Jennifer Keller, a nationally prominent trial attorney at Keller/Anderle LLP in Irvine, represented Burum with Stephen Larson as co-counsel.



The trial has received national coverage. Burum, along with former Supervisor Paul Biane, and Mark Kirk, former chief of staff for then-county Supervisor Gary Ovitt, were

found not guilty by the jury. A separate jury for a fourth defendant, former Assistant Assessor Jim Erwin, continued deliberations on Monday.

Jennifer Keller, one of California's top trial attorneys, said the jury was able to return so quickly with unanimous verdicts, after a little more than a day of deliberating, because there was no evidence proving the defendants' guilt. "Had they had evidence to chew over, real evidence of guilt, or evidence that could even be construed as evidence of guilt, it would have taken them awhile (to deliberate), but there wasn't any," Keller said. She added that jurors reported they were particularly troubled by the testimony of former Assistant Assessor Adam Aleman, who admitted to lying to the grand jury and authorities, and county Supervisor Josie Gonzales, who was impeached several times regarding a 2006 China trip in which she alleged Burum lurked nearby while a former assemblyman tried to lure her to dinner with the two of them – when it was proven Burum was not in China at the time. Burum produced a passport and credit card receipts for expenditures in Palm Springs during the China trip to prove it.

After a nearly three-year investigation by attorneys and investigators with the San Bernardino County District Attorney's and state Attorney General's offices, a grand jury in May 2011 had indicted Burum, Biane, Kirk and Erwin in connection with a controversial \$102 million litigation settlement between the county and Burum's investor group, Colonies Partners LP.

The November 2006 settlement ended nearly five years of heated litigation over who was responsible for flood control improvements at the Colonies' 434-acre commercial-residential development in Upland, Colonies Crossroads and Colonies at San Antonio. The settlement followed a scathing ruling against the county in July 2006 by now retired Superior Court Judge Christopher Warner, who attended Monday's court proceedings. In that opinion, which County Counsel Mitchell Norton characterized as "Armageddon" for the county's case, Judge Warner ruled that the county, through fraud and deceit,

acted in bad faith in its dealings with Burum and the Colonies Partners, and threatened public safety regarding the flood control issues at Colonies' property.

Prosecutors alleged Burum paid \$400,000 to Political Action Committees controlled by the three defendants and former Board of Supervisors Chairman Bill Postmus, who later entered a plea bargain with prosecutors and testified at the Colonies trial. The money, investigators alleged, actually represented bribes or payments for delivering the settlement. But after two days of cross-examination by Keller, Postmus recanted his testimony and admitted none of the PAC contributions were bribed – as he had originally told investigators. All of the defendants pleaded not guilty, and said the PAC contributions were not payoffs for the settlement votes and were legal, transparent, and could be viewed online by the public.

[Jennifer Keller](#) is one of California's premier trial lawyers. She has tried over 150 cases to jury verdict, ranging from complex civil matters — including business and intellectual property cases — to white collar to murder. She has received innumerable awards for excellence as a trial lawyer and excels at “bet the company” litigation. Ms. Keller is a Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers, widely considered the most significant honor a trial attorney in North America can receive. She is listed annually in “The Best Lawyers in America®,” is among the Lawdragon 500 Leading Lawyers in America, and has been selected for the “Benchmark Top 250 Women in Litigation” in the U.S. She appears routinely in the Los Angeles Daily Journal as one of California's Top 100 Lawyers. Ms. Keller is a fellow of the Litigation Counsel of America, an invitation-only organization limited to the top one-half of one percent of the nation's attorneys. Ms. Keller is also active in the community. She is the former President of the Orange County Bar Association and serves as a Trustee of Chapman University. She counts as present and former clients a number of judges, public officials, law enforcement officers, CEOs, CFOs, lawyers, physicians, professional athletes, venture capitalists and entrepreneurs.



About the firm: [Keller/Anderle LLP](#) is among the premier boutique litigation firms in California, with a record second to none, and local, statewide and national recognition of the firm's success. The firm handles high-stakes litigation of all types including commercial, intellectual property, securities, bad faith, class actions, white collar criminal defense, and entertainment/sports. Keller/Anderle LLP attorneys have won over \$925 million in judgments in just the last eight years, and successfully defended many other clients. Members of the firm have over 325 jury trials among them. Unique among law firms handling high profile, bet-the-company cases of such a caliber is that both name partners are women, and the firm is women-owned.