

Daily Journal

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TOP 100 LAWYERS IN CALIFORNIA 2018

COMMERCIAL LITIGATION

JENNIFER L. KELLER

KELLER/ANDERLE LLP | IRVINE

SPECIALTY: COMMERCIAL LITIGATION, INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY, WHITE COLLAR CRIMINAL DEFENSE

Keller represents clients in high-stakes business litigation and in other complex civil and criminal matters. She said she takes pride in her abilities as a master storyteller and trial tactician. In September she is set to be inducted into the California Lawyers Association Trial Lawyer Hall of Fame.

She's the lead trial lawyer for lender CashCall Inc. in a legal malpractice suit against Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP on claims a Washington, D.C. partner, Claudia Callaway, gave flawed legal advice that underlay the company's business model and led to massive litigation against it. "It's going to be a great trial," Keller said of a courtroom showdown set for spring 2019. "The firm is trying to shift the blame to its own client, and it will be interesting to see if a jury buys it." The case is valued at \$500 million. *CashCall Inc. v. Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP*, 30-2017-00914968 (Orange Super. Ct., filed May 12, 2017).

In February, following a three-week jury trial, Keller obtained a full defense verdict in a bellwether test for client Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Co. despite class claims of more than \$40 million regarding a life insurance pool issue. "This was a true test of my so-called stellar ability to tell stories, because this was an insurance case," she

said with a laugh. "It had me scratching my head because the plaintiff claimed she was entitled to dividends from a term life policy. Nobody buys a term life policy to get dividends. But there wasn't too much drama to be had from the facts."

So she tried charm. "I told them this would be dry and boring, but the advantage was they'd walk out with a lot of new knowledge about the inner workings of actuarial science." She told an old joke. "What's the difference between an insurance actuary who's an extrovert and one who's an introvert? The extrovert stares at your shoes when he talks to you."

The case had her worried because it was important. "I was afraid if we lost, term life policies would cease to exist. They are cheap protection for loved ones, and they are almost loss leaders for insurers. So we did a great public service here," Keller said. *Chavez v. Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Co.*, BC435321 (L.A. Super. Ct., filed April 7, 2010).

It was Keller who won a full acquittal in August 2017 after just three hours of jury deliberation for client real estate developer Jeffrey Burum, charged with bribery in an alleged scheme to win political approval of a \$102 million court



settlement in San Bernardino County. It was called possibly the biggest public corruption case in state history. Keller said she patiently built her case, "brick by brick," to show that the prosecution's case was fabricated. *People v. Biane*, FSB1102102 (San Bernardino Super. Ct., filed May 10, 2011).

— John Roemer