

Daily Journal

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Top Boutiques IN CALIFORNIA 2019

COMPLEX LITIGATION
AND TRIALS

Bienert Katzman PC

SAN CLEMENTE
AND LOS ANGELES

From an ocean view building in San Clemente, Bienert Katzman PC has built a national practice that includes white-collar criminal defense, complex bankruptcies and civil cases that often take a trial track.

The firm recently opened a second office in downtown Los Angeles, and its attorneys continue to pick up major cases that founding partner Thomas H. Bienert Jr. said showcase their broad skill range.

“We are seeing a lot of referrals come directly to the junior partners, which is a sign of our firm’s depth, potential and growth,” Bienert said.

Bienert is a former head of the U.S. attorney’s office in Orange County and Irell & Manella LLP partner who joined forces in 2007 with Steven J. Katzman, a former assistant U.S. attorney and U.S. bankruptcy trustee for five jurisdictions.

They now have 14 lawyers and a coast-to-coast caseload, including a major role in the college admissions scandal in Boston federal court and a growing



Jason Guffy

From left, Steven Jay Katzman and Thomas H. Bienert, Jr.

federal appellate practice. Their whistleblower practice includes a major health fraud case set for trial in Puerto Rico, and they generally find themselves immersed in some of the biggest white-collar and bankruptcy cases in Southern California.

They helped secure the second-largest recovery ever in a non-intervened False Claims Act case when partners Michael R. Williams, Ariana Seldman Hawbecker and Ali Matin landed a \$280 million settlement against drug maker Celgene Corp. in 2017. Also last year, Williams settled on the eve of trial a longstanding malpractice case on behalf of a lawyer accused of fraudulently managing a dairy family heir’s estate for a

small fraction of the initial \$200 million sought in damages.

This year, partners John L. Littrell and Anthony R. Bisconti represented NBA star James Harden in a personal injury jury trial in Los Angeles County Superior Court, securing a defense verdict. Littrell also is working with Bienert and Hawbecker on the defense of a cancer doctor in a tax-evasion case in Alaska in which they uncovered what a judge described as “flagrant government misconduct.”

“Things are busy for us,” Katzman said. “Because of our depth, we are fortunate to be in a place where no one person defines the firm, but a firm which as a whole enhances what we do.”

Bienert and Katzman strive for a work atmosphere that empowers all employees and gives them what they need to succeed at the highest level. Their new Los Angeles office not only makes it easier for clients who live in the area, it gives the attorneys a home base for their LA cases that Katzman said “has already exceeded our expectations.”

Katzman credited that success with the firm’s “longstanding connections and reputation in the Los Angeles market with former prosecutors, federal defenders and many other practitioners, as well as being more convenient to our LA-based clients.”

— Meghann M. Cuniff