

# Daily Journal

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## LABOR & EMPLOYMENT

What's the point of all this?

Despite being a relatively old practice (the U.S. Department of Labor was created in 1884), labor and employment law continues to develop in significant ways. California has for years led the nation in the development of labor and employment law. Because

of that, California has some of the most experienced practitioners in the nation.

You need no further proof of this than the *Daily Journal's* annual list of Top Labor & Employment lawyers. As you read through these pages you will find attorneys on the plaintiffs' and defense side involved

in every major labor and employment issue of the day. We considered 250 attorneys in compiling a list of 75. We did not include general practitioners, even those who argued marquee labor or employment cases. We wanted this list to be about litigators, and corporate and regulatory specialists.

— The Editors

### TOP 75 LABOR & EMPLOYMENT LAWYERS



#### JOAN FIFE

WINSTON & STRAWN LLP  
San Francisco  
Specialty: Wage-and-hour class actions

**F**ife, an attorney with 25 years of experience in employment litigation, uses the same skills in her casework as she does in a long-distance race.

"Running a marathon is very similar to a class action wage-and-hour litigation practice," Fife said. "It is all in the planning and preparation, [and] that is where most of the work is. The actual race is like the argument in court."

Fife, the head of Winston & Strawn LLP's San Francisco labor and employment group, specializes in wage-and-hour class actions. She has represented banks and large corporations a number of times in the past year.

In one case, she represented a large financial institution facing class allegations of misclassification, failure to pay vacation wages and failure to provide suitable seating. In her role as lead counsel for the defendant, Fife successfully dismissed with prejudice the allegations that branch managers were misclassified.

"Banks have been targets of wage and hours for at least five or six years," she said. "That's really why I work with a

lot of banks. The issues surrounding financial institutions are very, very interesting.

"Quite frankly, [the banks are] a pleasure to work with."

Fife supplements her practice by working with a variety of businesses. In a recent case, employees of a manufacturing company alleged wage-and-hour misclassification claims. She successfully convinced the plaintiffs to drop their nationwide claims, she said.

Fife said the reason for her success is due in part to her foresight and experience.

"Understanding how to communicate well with judges and anticipating what their concerns may be about the case" is critical, she said.

"Even when you want to give up or the judge is challenging you ... keep your composure to get through it. And, most importantly, breathe."

— Zack Smith