

Daily Journal

SEPTEMBER 27, 2011

TOP 100 LAWYERS IN CALIFORNIA

EDITOR'S 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

WILLIAM HEBERT

Hebert's main mission as president of the State Bar of California is making sure the organization is adequately protecting the public.

Last year, at the request of the state Legislature, Hebert chaired a task force to accomplish just that. He advocated a smaller Bar board with appointment of its members by the state Supreme Court and an amendment to the State Bar Act making public protection paramount in the admission, licensing and regulation of attorneys.

In his proposed amendment to make public protection paramount, Hebert said, "I think that there is either an actual or potential bias by lawyer members on the board of governors, elected by other lawyers, to see themselves as representing a constituency of lawyers and not the public."

Consequently, he said decisions being made at the board level tend to favor lawyers.

"If it's a close call and it puts a burden on lawyers but helps the public, chances are that the vote will help lawyers and not the public," Hebert said.

Hebert, whose term as president ends this month, is optimistic that the amendment will go through and get the governor's blessings.

"We really spent a lot of time on it, doing outreach to attorneys and the public," he said.

But change hasn't been embraced by everyone, Hebert said.

"It was difficult for a lot of the lawyers on the board to accept the changes," he said. "Some vociferously opposed them."

The main argument, he said, is lawyers think they should be able to self-regulate.

"They are firm that there is nothing wrong with the system," he said. "If it's not broke don't fix it, and that there is no evidence this will improve public protection."

Hebert disagrees.

"What's been unique about California is that, up to now, there has been no direct involvement by the Supreme Court in selection of any members of the Bar's governing body," he said. "In



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my experience, there is really no one harder on lawyers than the California Supreme Court. It holds us to the highest standards of the profession."

Ultimately, the changes will benefit everyone, Hebert said, adding, "I think it's going to be better for the public, and for lawyers in the long run."

Reflecting on his tenure as president and the heated emotions his proposals have generated, Hebert is philosophical.

"You have to do what you think is right," he said.

WILLIAM HEBERT

Calvo Fisher & Jacob LLP
San Francisco

President of the State Bar

Practice type: Litigation

Specialty: Class action, Defense,

Business torts

— Pat Broderick