

Vanessa O. Wells
Partner, San Francisco, California

Insurance Regulation
 Property & Casualty Insurance
 Complex Commercial Litigation
 Appellate
 Consumer Litigation Defense



VANESSA O. WELLS

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Current Scope of Practice

Vanessa O. Wells focuses her practice on complex business litigation involving pricing issues, business regulation matters (*e.g.* California’s Unruh Act), and unfair competition litigation. Ms Wells’ practice has centered on consumer class actions and actions brought by consumer groups or agencies. Ms. Wells has practiced before administrative tribunals and all levels of state and federal courts, and has appeared before legislative committees to provide experience concerning proposed business regulatory bills. Recently, Ms. Wells participated in a task force organized by Civil Justice Association of California to develop a possible class action reform initiative for the State of California.

Ms. Wells has litigated numerous actions brought in the courts pursuant to California’s Unfair Competition Law, Business and Professions Code §§ 17200-17209 (the “UCL”). Ms. Wells submitted briefs as *amicus curiae* in most of the California Supreme Court cases elucidating this Law over the past fifteen years. Ms. Wells has had substantial experience litigating securities fraud, corporate governance, trade libel, unfair competition, privacy, and other business conduct cases. Ms. Wells has also handled Public Records Act matters, including matters involving trade secrets in the hands of government agencies, from the perspective of the person requesting records as well as the perspective of the owner of the records seeking to prevent disclosure.

Additionally, Ms. Wells’ extensive experience includes representation in adjudicatory and rulemaking hearings before the California Department of Insurance and in Insurance Department workshops, as well as in proceedings before the Office of Administrative Law.

Litigation Matters

Pricing Litigation

- *Nakashima v. State Farm Mutual Automobile Ins. Co.*, 153 P.2d 664 (N.M. App. 2007)
- *Spanish Speaking Citizens’ Foundation, Inc. v. Low*, 85 Cal. App. 4th 1179 (2000)
- *Walker v. Allstate Indem. Co.*, 77 Cal. App. 4th 750 (2000)

- *State Farm Mutual Automobile Ins. Co. v. Quackenbush*, 77 Cal. App. 4th 65 (1999)
- *Wolfe v. State Farm Fire and Casualty Co.*, 46 Cal. App. 4th 554 (1996)

Public Records Act/Trade Secret

- *State Farm Mutual Automobile Ins. Co. v. Garamendi*, 32 Cal. 4th 1029 (2004)

Amicus Curiae Briefs

- *MacKay v. Superior Court*, 188 Cal. App. 4th 1427 (2010).
- *Californians for Disability Rights v. Mervyn's LLC*, 39 Cal. 4th 223 (2006) and *Branick v. Downey Savings and Loan Ass'n*, 39 Cal. 4th 235 (2006)
- *Jonathan Neil & Associates v. Jones*, 33 Cal. 4th 917 (2004)
- *Korea Supply Co. v. Lockheed Martin Corp.*, 29 Cal 4th 1134 (2003)
- *Cortez v. Puroator Air Filtration Products Co.*, 23 Cal. 4th 163 (2000)
- *Cel-Tech Communications, Inc. v. Los Angeles Cellular Telephone Company*, 20 Cal. 4th 163 (1999)
- *Quelimane Company, Inc. v. Stewart Title Guaranty Co.*, 19 Cal. 4th 26 (1998)

Affiliations, Activities and Accomplishments

Ms. Wells is admitted in California (1985) and before the U.S. District Court for the Northern (1985) and Southern (1989) Districts of California, as well as the Federal Circuit (1988). She is a member of the California Bar Association. She has appeared on “top lawyers” lists for class action litigation as well as “Law and Politics”. She is a contributor to Sedgwick’s Appellate Strategist blog.

Ms. Wells is an active community member, serving on such organizations as the Palo Alto Little League Board of Directors and the Mid-Peninsula Access Corporation Board, as well as volunteering for the East Palo Alto Community Law Project.

Presentations & Publications

While at Sedgwick, Ms. Wells has written and/or presented on the following topics:

- “A 5-4 Decision in the Making: Constitutional Challenges to Federal Healthcare Reform,” Sedgwick Annual Healthcare Seminar Series, Los Angeles and San Francisco (June 8-9, 2011).
- “Labels Matter, But No Reset to Pre-Prop. 64,” *The Daily Journal* (March 28, 2011).

- “A Quick Analysis of Kwikset: Labels Might Matter, But No Reset to Proposition 64,” Sedgwick’s *Product Liability Advisory* (February 24, 2011).
- Moderator, Sedgwick’s 2nd Annual Insurance Regulation and Litigation Seminar: California Developments and Challenges for 2011, Sacramento, CA (February 15, 2011).
- “Health Care Reform: The First Nine Months,” ABA TIPS Midwinter Symposium on Insurance and Employee Benefits, Miami Beach, FL (January 14, 2011).
- “California Court of Appeal Adopts Filed Rate Doctrine for Insurance Rate Filings,” Sedgwick’s *Insurance Law Flash* (October 11, 2010).
- “What Happens Now: The Federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and State Regulation of Health Insurance,” Sedgwick Annual Healthcare Seminar Series, Los Angeles, Orange County and San Francisco (May 24-25, 2010) and Hartford, CT (September 22, 2010).
- “Ships Passing in the Night: How California’s Statutory Framework Directs Traffic Through the Maze of Jurisdictional Doctrines Concerning Insurance Rates,” *University of San Francisco Law Review*, Volume 44, Number 4 (Spring 2010).
- “Chicago Seminar III: What’s New in Class Actions,” Sedgwick’s 2010 Chicago Seminar Series, Chicago (September 23, 2010).
- “New Insurance Ballot Initiatives on the Horizon in California,” Sedgwick’s *Insurance Law Flash* (March 2010).
- “Insurance Roundtable with the CDI,” Santa Clara Law School Roundtable, Santa Clara, CA (February 24, 2010).
- “Insurance Rate Regulation in California: A Class Action Bonanza, or Exclusive Jurisdiction Before the Regulator?” Sedgwick’s Insurance Regulation & Litigation Seminar, Sacramento, CA (January 13, 2010).

Education

Ms. Wells received her J.D. (1985) *summa cum laude*, from the University of Santa Clara School of Law, where she was Articles Editor of the *Santa Clara Law Review*. She graduated with an A.B. from Stanford University.

Ms. Wells practiced at Heller, Ehrman LLP for 20 years, and was a member of the firm from 1992 until 2008.