

Daily Journal

OCTOBER 20, 2021

TOP BOUTIQUES IN CALIFORNIA 2021



Left To Right: Andrew H. Werbrock, Emily A. Andrews, Karen A. Getman, Thomas A. Willis, Lance H. Olson, Richard R. Rios, James C. Harrison

**OLSON
REMCHO**

SACRAMENTO

OAKLAND

LONG BEACH

POLITICAL AND
GOVERNMENT LAW

PETE ESCOBAR/ DAILY JOURNAL

The creation of Olson Remcho 20 months ago out of California's two top, Democrat-oriented political law firms went smoothly, partners say. After all, the two firms' attorneys had known and worked with each other for years. And lawyers from both firms already were collaborating on a couple of matters prior to their merger.

One such combined effort resulted in an important ruling on local taxation that came out nearly a year after the firms formally merged. In *City of Fresno v. Fresno Building Healthy Communities*, 58 Cal. App. 5th 884 (Cal. App. 5th Dist., Dec. 17, 2020), the appellate court held that Proposition 13's general requirement of a two-thirds popular vote to adopt a tax increase does not apply to citizen-sponsored initiatives, but only to ones put forth by local legislative bodies, like city councils.

Attorneys from Olson Remcho predecessor firm Olson Hagel & Fishburn represented the winning Healthy Communities group against the city early on. Attorneys from Remcho, Johansen & Purcell came in for the appeal, said Karen A. Getman of that firm, who is now Olson Remcho's managing partner. "It's a very big ruling," she said.

Another matter shows how the relationships and expertise of the prior firms enhance the combined firm. Olson Remcho filed a lawsuit in July for the California School Boards Association arguing that new formal guidance from State Controller Betty Yee would wrongly allow counties to hold back money from school districts they should receive based on attendance at charter schools.

"That's a good example of how we've meshed so well together," said Lance H. Olson, who co-founded

Olson Hagel in 1977. He said Getman was brought into the picture for her expertise in school financing.

Besides that case, the firm is deep into work on past, present and upcoming ballot measures. "This is what we refer to affectionately as initiative season," Olson said.

It won a challenge blocking enforcement of last year's Proposition 22 on keeping app-based drivers classified as independent contractors. *Castellanos v. State of California*, RG21088725, Alameda Sup. Ct. filed Feb. 11, 2021). The case is now on appeal.

The firm is working with proponents for two measures stalled by the pandemic, one to tax some plastic food utensils and packaging and another to allow in-person sports betting at tribal casinos and race-tracks. It is also helping oppose competing gambling measures.

Getman is working with her teacher union clients to oppose proposed initiatives to set up school vouchers and similar programs. The firm also is helping a group called The Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids to oppose a referendum designed to undo a statute banning flavored tobacco products.

Other work includes representing the state Legislature and many local jurisdictions on redistricting. "It's a huge part of our practice," Getman said. This time around, the firm also represented the Legislature in winning adjusted deadlines for the process due to pandemic delays in the national census.

"It was a very intense year, but I think I speak for all of us when I say we're very, very glad we merged because we each brought strengths to the table," Getman said.

— Don DeBenedictis