

Nicholas J. Ferraro (State Bar No. 306528)
Lauren N. Vega (State Bar No. 306525)
Dorota James (State Bar No. 309933)
Ferraro Vega Employment Lawyers, Inc.
3333 Camino del Rio South, Suite 300
San Diego, California 92108
(619) 693-7727 main / (619) 350-6855 fax
nick@ferrarovega.com / lauren@ferrarovega.com /
dorota@ferrarovega.com

*Attorneys for Plaintiffs Lance Tyler Dunn and
Daniel Castro*

**SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
FOR THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO**

LANCE TYLER DUNN and DANIEL
CASTRO, individually and on behalf of all
others similarly situated,

Plaintiffs,

v.

RAILPROS FIELD SERVICES, INC. and
DOES 1 through 50, inclusive,

Defendants.

Case No. 24CU022030C

*Hon. Blaine K. Bowman
Dept. 74*

CLASS ACTION

**DECLARATION OF NICHOLAS J.
FERRARO IN SUPPORT OF PLAINTIFFS'
MOTION FOR FINAL APPROVAL OF
CLASS AND PAGA ACTION
SETTLEMENT**

Motion for Final Approval Hearing:

Date: July 17, 2026

Time: 8:30 a.m.

Action Filed: November 12, 2024

1 I, Nicholas J. Ferraro, declare as follows:

2 1. I am counsel of record for one of the Plaintiffs in this action, Lance Tyler Dunn and
3 Daniel Castro, and principal of Ferraro Vega Employment Lawyers. I am an attorney licensed to
4 practice law in the State of California and Washington State.

5 2. I submit this declaration in support of Plaintiffs' Motion for Final Approval of Class
6 and PAGA Action Settlement. If called as a witness, I would testify honestly to the below facts based
7 on my personal knowledge. Attached to this declaration are true and correct copies of the following
8 documents:

- 9 a. Exhibit 1 – Firm Resume
10 b. Exhibit 2 – *Laffey Matrix*
11 c. Exhibit 3 – Brightflag Report: “Hourly Rates in Am Law 100 Firms: Increases
12 and Key Drivers”

13 **Case Background and Settlement**

14 3. The claims and litigation background for this wage and hour class and PAGA action
15 through the date of preliminary approval are set forth in the Declaration of Nicholas J. Ferraro
16 previously filed in support of Plaintiffs' Motion for Preliminary Approval. (See ROA #36 and 41.)
17 Those facts are not restated here.

18 4. Since the Court's Order Granting Preliminary Approval, the notice has been disbursed
19 to class members in a manner consistent with the terms and conditions of the Court's order and the
20 Settlement. The notice procedure is set forth in the accompanying declaration of the Settlement
21 Administrator.

22 5. The resolution reached during mediation is memorialized in the Settlement Agreement
23 and Stipulation to Resolve Class Action and PAGA Claims. On March 13, 2026, my office duly
24 informed the LWDA of the Settlement, including resolution of the PAGA claims, by uploading the
25 settlement and providing information about the terms of the Settlement to the LWDA, using its online
26 portal. To date, the LWDA has provided no responses nor indicated any objection or opposition to
27 the Settlement.
28

Adequacy of Representation

Contingency Fee and Billing Rates

a. Unlike my former practice as a defense attorney, representing companies in class action and other employment lawsuits, plaintiff's class action attorneys do not get paid by the hour in regular billing cycles. Instead, in every case, there is no recovery unless we win. The cases that are often presented to the Court are cases like this one where there is a successful outcome and resolution, with what can be a substantial recovery of funds. However, for every case with a final approval or settlement order that is successful, there are an equal or greater number of others that result in an unsuccessful outcome. In the wage and hour context, it is not uncommon to have a prior settlement releasing the claims at issue in the case you have filed, an inability of the defendant to pay or resolve the case on a class or PAGA basis, a defendant or its counsels' efforts to settle individually with employees and effectively "gut" the case, merits issues that develop based on strong overlooked factual defenses of the employer, among the usual risks such as the legal challenges in certifying cases

1 as class actions when there is a rampant problem (such as rest breaks) but very little documentary
2 evidence (and the case boils down to conflicting testimony).

3 b. In these cases, the defendant employer is often represented by the top AmLaw
4 100 or 200 law firms, or well-established full-service litigation firms with excellent lawyers. The
5 defendant employer often has insurance that covers some aspect of their defense and are often well
6 prepared to handle the litigation. The quality and sophistication of defense representation is typically
7 excellent, with hardworking, motivated associate attorneys. Our formidable adversaries on the
8 opposite side of the aisle have the benefit of non-contingent, hourly work, based on market-based
9 billing rates.

10 c. There is a substantial “non-billable” time investment required in this line of
11 work. A significant portion of my hours, my partner and associates’ hours, and the hours of my legal
12 assistants, law clerks, and other hourly staff, are spent on activities that are what I call “double non-
13 billable.” First, they are not billable because we never charge our clients or potential clients an hourly
14 fee. Second, this work is non-billable because the time will never be submitted to the Court for
15 approval in a class action settlement motion. For example, we do hundreds if not thousands of free
16 consultations each year for employees. Most employees do not have a case and need general advice
17 that ranges from setting an appropriate meeting with the Human Resources Department to voice their
18 issue, to simply advising employees that the actions are not illegal and therefore they have no case.
19 Additionally, we often research and investigate cases, spending upwards of 50-100 hours, only to find
20 out that there is a prior case or settlement in a different county or district, or there is an arbitration
21 agreement that precludes the case altogether, or the company has financial issues. These are a few
22 examples of the time incurred that is never billed or recovered. Our firm must absorb these costs,
23 which is why the contingency practice only works when the risk is appropriately accommodated.

24 d. We must front 100% of the costs associated with the case, as well as our internal
25 overhead. Our firm does not employ litigation financing, so everything is funded through hard work,
26 with our firm taking on all the lending risk. All costs on every case are advanced by my firm without
27 interest. In these cases, we advance all costs of the litigation (which can generally range from \$15,000
28 to more than \$150,000), in addition to covering internal firm costs such as payroll, rent, equipment,

1 insurance, software licenses, research, and other usual law firm overhead, and take on 100% of the
2 risk if the case is unsuccessful. At the outset of a case, you do not know if the defendant is going to
3 settle or if they wish to litigate it for two to five years. In cases worth hundreds of thousands or
4 millions of dollars, defendants often want to drag cases out for years to delay payment.

5 e. The labor and employment attorney market is competitive, and my firm has to
6 compete to retain and hire talented attorneys from the same firms that we go up against, and which
7 have the benefit of non-contingent, hourly billing and payment structures. Defense associates at many
8 of these firms earn a starting salary in excess of \$200,000 with associate salaries increasing in the
9 eighth year to more than \$400,000, before bonuses are earned. *The 2024 salary survey, CHAMBERS*
10 *ASSOCIATES*, <https://www.chambers-associate.com/law-firms/law-firm-salaries> (last visited Sept.
11 18, 2024); see also “Big Law Associate Compensation Soars to \$240k for 1st Years, \$550K for 8th
12 Years,” TaxProf Blog, [https://taxprof.typepad.com/taxprof_blog/2023/12/biglaw-associate-](https://taxprof.typepad.com/taxprof_blog/2023/12/biglaw-associate-compensation-soars-to-240k-for-1st-years-550k-for-8th-years-.html)
13 [compensation-soars-to-240k-for-1st-years-550k-for-8th-years-.html](https://taxprof.typepad.com/taxprof_blog/2023/12/biglaw-associate-compensation-soars-to-240k-for-1st-years-550k-for-8th-years-.html) (Dec. 1, 2023). Partners at these
14 firms earn significantly more. As a public interest, boutique law firm with a focus on retaining talent
15 through the quality of our work, the focus of our work, helping regular people and having an positive
16 impact on corporate policy and compliance, we also need to remain competitive in the market to retain
17 and hire attorneys who always have the opportunity to take their skills to work in defense of companies
18 in these matters.

19 f. The hours expended in this litigation precluded us from working on other
20 matters. Due to the nature of our practice, we were also precluded from working on hourly, billable
21 cases that did not bear the same risk profile as this one. However, as mentioned, it is our practice to
22 only represent employees in cases like this one, and so we do not solicit hourly billable work but
23 instead are dependent upon the contingency practice entirely.

24 g. As an additional point of reference, this Court may be further aware that the
25 standard contingency fee for personal injury (and other similar litigation) ranges from 33.33% for a
26 prelitigation settlement, to 40% once a lawsuit has been filed, to the upwards of even 50% if the case
27 proceeds through trial. These cases are subject to the private market’s range for contingency fee rates
28 and allow individuals to obtain counsel through the contingency fee model. Class action litigation

1 fees, which are subject to the scrutiny and approval of the court, are well within the low range of these
2 contingency rates that other attorneys and law firms generally charge for single-plaintiff work. This
3 supports the fee award here, particularly given the public interest served and the number of individuals
4 who benefit from settlements such as these.

5 h. Our view, reflected in the case law, is that the contingency model, tempered by
6 the lodestar multiplier cross-check, helps account for these and other risks. Because there are a lot of
7 sunk time and costs on cases and potential cases that are never filed or never settled, the contingency
8 fee structure is really the backbone of this practice and a core element of access to justice keeping our
9 firm and others like it in business and with the necessary resources to advance the interests of our
10 clients and the public at large in litigation that the Legislature has deemed important and that we
11 believe in.

12 8. Our attorneys' fees are provided for in the Settlement Agreement, which authorizes an
13 attorneys' fee of 33.33% of the settlement fund. Additionally, our fully contingent Attorney-Client
14 Retainer Agreement with our client provides that fees shall be calculated for any class settlement as a
15 percentage of the settlement fund.

16 9. For reference, however, my office worked 127 total hours on this case, excluding non-
17 billable secretarial and administrative work.

18 10. Our hourly rate is \$685 per hour, based on the skill and experience of Attorneys
19 Nicholas Ferraro and Lauren Vega. This hourly rate has been approved in the class action approvals
20 listed on our Firm Resume.

21 11. The reasonableness of these rates is confirmed by comparing them with the rates of
22 other counsel practicing complex and class litigation, as detailed in the National Law Journal Billing
23 Survey. *See e.g. Zest IP Holdings, LLC v. Implant Direct MFG., LLC*, 2014 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 167563
24 (S.D. Cal. 2014) (finding that "Mayer Brown's \$775 average billing rate for partners" and "Mayer
25 Brown's \$543 average associate billing rate" are reasonable rates when compared within 21 other firms
26 practicing in the Southern District of California). Moreover, these hourly rates are generally in line
27 with rates prevailing in this community for similar services by lawyers of reasonably comparable skill,
28 experience, and reputation. *See, e.g., Soler v. Cnty. of San Diego*, No. 14cv2470-MMA (RBB), 2021

1 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 114484, *15 (S.D. Cal. Jun. 18, 2021) (collecting cases and noting that “courts in
2 this District have awarded hourly rates for work performed in civil cases by attorneys with significant
3 experience anywhere in the range of \$550 per hour to more than \$1000 per hour”); *Herring Networks,*
4 *Inc. v. Maddow*, No. 19-cv-1713-BAS-AHG, 2021 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 23163, *18-21 (S.D. Cal. Feb.
5 5, 2021) (collecting cases awarding fees based on hourly rates in the range of \$295 to \$943 and
6 concluding that “reasonable rates in this district for those of comparable skill, experience, and
7 reputation” were between \$470 to \$1,150); *Khoja v. Orexigen Therapeutics*, No. 15-cv-00540-JLS-
8 AGS, 2021 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 230105, at *31 (S.D. Cal. Nov. 30, 2021) (holding the lodestar cross-
9 check (which included partner rates of \$925-\$1,100) supported a fee representing 33.3 percent of the
10 common fund).

11 12. Additionally, San Diego County Superior Court Judge Sturgeon approved our
12 attorneys’ fees based on our submission of an hourly rate set forth on the *Laffey Matrix*’s \$700+ per
13 hour benchmark for attorneys with 8 years of experience in *Belmontez-Carillo v. Metropolitan Area*
14 *Advisory Committee*, San Diego Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2019-00054227-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Eddie C.
15 Sturgeon) (Feb. 23, 2023). Our motion papers in that case asked the Court to cross check our rates
16 (and those of our co-counsel) using the *Laffey Matrix*, an inflation-adjusted methodology of attorney
17 rates for lawyers of varying experience levels first approved by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the
18 District Court of Columbia in *Laffey v. Northwest Airlines, Inc.*, 746 F.2d 4 (D.C. Cir. 1984). The
19 *Laffey Matrix*, for attorneys with up to 8 years’ experience, provides for a median rate of \$733 per
20 hour. A true and correct copy of the *Laffey Matrix*, is attached in full as Exhibit 2 to this declaration.
21 However, the Court in *Belmontez* approved the fee motion and final approval motion without
22 discussion or analysis.

23 13. These rates are further supported by the actual billing rates in the San Diego market.
24 For example, based on publicly available litigation filings from this year, the market rate for
25 employment law attorneys, based on those presently in effect at San Diego’s largest law firm by
26 attorney headcount, Procopio, Cory, Hargreaves & Savitch, are as follows: \$710 for Partner and \$510
27 for Associate (5th Year). Partner and blended rates at other AmLaw 100 law firms are often higher
28 according to a report from a recent methodology. See Exhibit 3 (2024 Am Law 100 Billing Rate

Methodology). The high hourly rates reflect increasing overhead, costs of living, attorney costs, inflation, and other pressures. The landscape for contingency attorneys is even more challenging, warranting comparable rates.

14. Our practice operates on a 100% contingent fee basis, whereby we cover the litigation costs for our clients and do not require repayment in the event the case does not result in a prevailing outcome or settlement. We take on the risk of the case and work efficiently and effectively for our clients. Based on these factors and the foregoing information, we respectfully request the Court approve the request for reimbursement of attorneys' fees in this case.

Costs

15. My firm has requested reimbursement of litigation costs totaling \$16,831.07:

Category	Costs
Expert Fees	\$10,203.75
OneLegal and Filing Fees	\$2,195.10
Mediation Fees	\$4,000.00
Postage	\$32.22
LWDA	\$150.00
Final Approval Est. Costs ¹	\$250.00
Total	\$16,831.07

16. Because these costs are reasonable, ordinary, and customarily occurred in the prosecution of this wage and hour class action, Plaintiffs respectfully request the Court approve the reimbursement.

Service Award to Plaintiffs

17. The Settlement provides for a Service Award of totaling \$50,000 (\$10,000 to each Plaintiff) to recognize Plaintiffs' substantial effort, risk, and initiative in assisting with the prosecution and resolution of this case. The proposed Service Award for each Plaintiff is fair and reasonable in this case under the *Van Vranken* five-factor test. *Van Vranken v. Atl. Richfield Co.*, 901 F. Supp. 294, 299 (N.D. Cal. 1995). The Service Award accounts for a small portion of the Gross Settlement Amount. Without Plaintiffs' initiative in pursuing this case, there would likely be no recovery, and the statute of limitations for the alleged wage and hour claims may have continued to run on current and former employees unwilling or unknowing of their ability to recover past lost wages for the claims

¹ Estimated future costs include OneLegal filing fees for the motion for final approval and motion for attorneys' fees, court filing fees for the two motions, and courtesy copy fees.

1 alleged. Plaintiffs' steadfast contributions in light of the risks and stresses of the case litigation should
2 be acknowledged. Additionally, Plaintiffs turned down settlement opportunities that would have
3 resulted in a higher individual payment, but at a cost to the putative class.

4 18. Plaintiffs' efforts as the class representatives and the basis for the requested Service
5 Award are further detailed in the accompanying Declarations of each Plaintiff.

6 **Concluding Statements**

7 19. In sum, I believe that the Settlement in this case is fair, reasonable, and in the class's
8 best interests. My firm worked hard and creatively for this settlement and obtained a positive result
9 for the class, with individuals recovering significant compensation. The resolution at mediation
10 presented an excellent opportunity for the class to obtain a robust and substantial settlement, which I
11 believe should be approved.

12 I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California and the United
13 States of America that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed on June 23, 2026, in San Diego,
14 California.

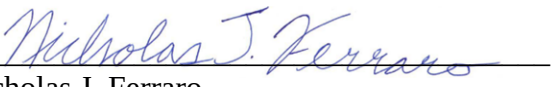
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16 _____
17 Nicholas J. Ferraro
18 *Attorney for Plaintiffs Lance Tyler Dunn and Daniel Castro*
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EXHIBIT 1

Ferraro Vega Employment Lawyers, Inc.
3333 Camino del Rio South, Suite 300
San Diego, California 92108
(619) 693-7727 main / (619) 350-6855 facsimile
www.ferrarovega.com

LAW FIRM RESUME

Ferraro Vega Employment Lawyers was founded in 2018 and represents plaintiffs throughout California in class, collective, and representative actions under the California Labor Code, Private Attorneys General Act, and Fair Labor Standards Act.

PRINCIPAL ATTORNEYS

Nicholas J. Ferraro, Esq.

California State Bar No. 306528 (admitted 2015)

Washington State Bar No. 59674 (admitted 2022)

Education

University of San Diego School of Law (J.D., *San Diego Law Review*)

Gonzaga University (B.A.)

During law school, Mr. Ferraro externed for a federal magistrate in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California, worked in the law school library as a library clerk, and as a legal intern for a San Diego-based commercial real estate company.

Employment

Attorney, Ferraro Vega Employment Lawyers (2018 to present)

Attorney, Duane Morris LLP (2017 to 2018)

Attorney, Gordon Rees Scully Mansukhani (2016 to 2017)

Attorney & Law Clerk, Simpson Delmore Greene LLP (2014 to 2016)

Prior to starting the firm, Mr. Ferraro worked in the employment law practice groups of Gordon Rees and Duane Morris, where he advised companies, drafted employee policies and agreements, and defended employers in class action and PAGA litigation.

Organizations

Wage and Hour Committee Member, California Employment Lawyers Association (2020 to 2024)

Leadership Development Committee, Association of Business Trial Lawyers (2017 to 2019)

Sexual Harassment Task Force, Lawyers Club of San Diego (2018)

Presentations and Publications

Guest Lecturer, University of San Diego School of Law Employment Law Classes (various)

Attorney Panelist, California Dept. of Labor Standards Enforcement Seminar (Sept. 2021)
Panelist, San Diego County Bar Association Labor & Employment Conference (2019, 2021)
Publications in *California Employment Law Letter*, *HR Daily Advisor*, Lexology, and various firm newsletters and alerts

Awards

Super Lawyers “Rising Star” in the field of Class Actions (2019 to 2024)
Best Lawyers “Ones to Watch” for Employment Lawyers (2021 to 2024)
“Leaders in Law Awards” Nominee in *San Diego Business Journal* (2022)

Lauren N. Vega, Esq.

California State Bar No. 306525 (admitted 2015)

Education

University of San Diego School of Law (J.D., *San Diego Law Review*)
University of California, San Diego (B.A.)

During law school, Ms. Vega was an active participant in moot court. She received the Outstanding and Best Brief Awards in back-to-back years at the Duberstein Moot Court Competition in New York City. She also served as a judicial extern for federal judges in the Southern District and Central District.

Employment

Attorney, Ferraro Vega Employment Lawyers (2020 to present)
Attorney, Procopio, Cory, Hargreaves & Savitch (2015 to 2020)

Prior to joining the firm, Ms. Vega defended employers as defense counsel in approximately 50 class and PAGA actions throughout California. She also advised companies on wage and hour compliance and drafted employee policies, procedures, and agreements.

Organizations

Member, California Employment Lawyers Association (2020 to present)

Presentations and Publications

Speaker, Procopio’s Annual Labor & Employment Seminar (2015 to 2019)
Publications in *Los Angeles Daily Journal* and various firm newsletters

Awards

Super Lawyers “Rising Star” in the field of Class Actions (2022, 2023)
Best Lawyers “Ones to Watch” for Employment Lawyers (2021 to 2024)
“Leaders in Law Awards” Nominee in *San Diego Business Journal* (2021)

Dorota A. James, Esq.

California State Bar No. 309933 (admitted 2016)

Education

University of San Diego School of Law (LL.M., 2014) Comparative Law

University of Saarland Law School (Ph.D., 1999)

University of Saarland Law School (LL.M., 1996) German Law

University of Wroclaw Law School (M.S., summa cum laude, 1994)

Ms. James is a tenth-year attorney with extensive experience handling complex wage-and-hour litigation. For the past ten years, she has served as Plaintiffs' counsel of record in more than fifty (50) wage-and-hour class action and PAGA cases. Prior to her admission to the California Bar in 2016, Ms. James worked as a senior litigation paralegal at a San Diego law firm specializing in plaintiffs' wage-and-hour employment litigation. In that role, she provided comprehensive litigation support in complex class actions, including pre-filing investigation, discovery, pre-mediation analysis, and post-settlement claims administration. During that time, she actively assisted in the litigation of more than fifty (50) employment class action cases.

Honors

Dean's Comparative Law Award (Highest Grade Point Average in L.L.M. Program)

Konrad Adenauer Foundation Scholarship Recipient (German Scholarship for talented foreign students)

Employment

Attorney, Ferraro Vega Employment Lawyers (2025 – Present)

Attorney, Wilshire Law Firm (05/2024 – 02/2025)

Attorney, Dinsmore & Shohl LLP (02/2021 – 05/2024)

Attorney, ShortLegal, APC (10/2018 – 02/2021)

Attorney, Tyson Mendes, LP (02/2018 – 10/2018)

Attorney, Parker Straus, LP (10/2016 – 02/2018)

Senior Paralegal, Graham Hollis APC (10/2007 – 10/2015)

Associate Legal Officer, International Organization for Migration (12/2001 – 02/2005)

Jennifer L. Connor, Esq.

California State Bar No. 241480 (admitted 2006)

Education

University of Notre Dame Law School (J.D., cum laude, 2003)

Boston College (B.A., magna cum laude, 2000)

Boston College School of Theology Ministry (M.Div., 2019)

Ms. Connor is an attorney with over two decades of experience advocating for plaintiffs in civil litigation. Her practice focuses on wage and hour and employment class actions. She

has represented clients in state and federal court forums across various areas, including consumer protection, unfair business practices, product liability, fraud, and antitrust. Ms. Connor is recognized for her strong appellate writing skills, having contributed to significant appellate matters. She has experience in successfully certifying class actions and handling dispositive motions. She has also been appointed as class counsel. Her background includes involvement in numerous putative class, collective, and representative actions and managing hundreds of contested and/or settlement-certified cases, with wage and hour litigation comprising over 50% of her practice.

Civic Organizations

Volunteer, Christian Legal Aid of Los Angeles (CLA-LA)

Volunteer District Attorney, Orange County District Attorney's Office (Trial Attorney Partnership program)

Presentations and Publications

Authored appellate briefs, including for *Aryeh v. Canon Business Solutions, Inc.* (2013) 55 Cal.4th 1185 and a Respondent's Brief before the California Court of Appeal, Fourth Appellate District.

Guest Lecturer on employment law for MCLE, including CELA's 28th Annual Conference

Employment

Attorney, Ferraro Vega Employment Lawyers (2026 - Present)

Attorney, Casey Gerry Francavilla Blatt LLP (2024 - 2025)

Attorney, CounselOne, PC (2020 - 2023)

Attorney, Rex Parris Law Firm (Summer Intern: May -Aug. 2017)

Attorney, Cohelan Khoury & Singer (2014 - 2015)

Attorney, Spiro Moore LLP (2012 to 2014)

Attorney, Westrup Klick, LLP (2004 to 2011)

Ricardo De Leon, Esq.

California State Bar No. 365493 (admitted 2025)

Education

University of San Diego School of Law (J.D.)

San Diego State University (B.A.)

During law school, Mr. De Leon gained practical experience in several law clerk positions, including at the USD Immigration Law Clinic, and firms that specialized in advising small businesses, medical malpractice, and a non-profit focused on legislative reform. Mr. De Leon served on the board of the USD La Raza student organization and as a senior editor for the USD International Law Journal.

Employment

Attorney, Ferraro Vega Employment Lawyers, Inc. (2025 to Present)

Post Bar Law Clerk, Banker's Hill Law Firm A.P.C. (Fall 2025)
Law Clerk, Hegeler & Anderson, A.P.C. (2024 - 2025)
Law Clerk, Pokala Law, A.P.C. (2023 - 2024)
Law Clerk, USD Immigration Law Clinic (Fall 2023)
Law Clerk, Western Center on Law & Poverty (Summer 2023)

Troy Q. Strange

California State Bar No. 346637

Education

California Western School of Law (J.D., 2022)
California Polytechnic State University of San Luis Obispo (B.A., 2018)

Mr. Strange is a trial attorney dedicated to advocating for California employees in complex litigation, including Labor Code violations, wage-and-hour disputes, and PAGA representative actions. A first-chair trial lawyer, Mr. Strange possesses a sophisticated litigation background that spans both public enforcement and private defense. He previously served as an attorney for the Department of Industrial Relations, where he prosecuted cases across Southern California, including San Diego, San Bernardino, Riverside, and Imperial Counties. He further refined his expertise at Procopio, Cory, Hargreaves & Savitch LLP, advising employers on statutory compliance and litigating single-plaintiff and class-action matters. He is admitted to practice in the State of California and the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California.

Affiliations

San Diego County Bar Association

Employment

Attorney, Ferraro Vega Employment Lawyers, Inc. (2026 to Present)
Attorney, Procopio, Cory, Hargreaves & Savitch (2025)
Attorney, California Department of Industrial Relations, Division of Labor Standards Enforcement, (2023-2025)
Attorney, Sayyar Law APC, (2022-2023)
Law Clerk, Law Offices of Benjamin J. Cheeks, (2021-2022)
Law Clerk, GrahamHollis (2021-2022)
Law Clerk, Aguirre and Severson, LLP (2021)
Law Clerk, Alternate Public Defender's Office North County San Diego, (2020)

Andrew Katseanes, Esq.

California State Bar No. 351638 (admitted 2023)

Education

University of San Diego School of Law (J.D.)
Idaho State University (B.S.)

During law school, Mr. Katseanes was an active member of the mock trial team and earned recognition for his pro bono service with the Legal Aid Society of San Diego, where he assisted with unlawful detainers and restraining orders. He began his career working in civil defense before transitioning to plaintiff-side employment law. He is admitted to practice in the State of California and the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California.

Employment

Attorney, Burger, Meyer, & D'Angelo, LLP (2025-2026)

Attorney, Tyson & Mendez, LLP (2024-2025)

Law Clerk, The Curran Law Firm, APC (2021-2023)

Law Clerk, Office of the Primary Public Defender San Diego, (2021)

Nicolas Ahadzadeh, Esq.

California State Bar No. 365386 (admitted 2025)

Education

California Western School of Law (J.D.)

Grand Canyon University (B.A.)

Certificates

Mediation Clinic Training and Field Experience

During law school, Mr. Ahadzadeh was an active member of student-ran organizations, including the Student Bar Association, was invited to the law school's Alternative Dispute Resolution team, earned multiple Distinguished Advocate Awards, and performed volunteer work at multiple legal organizations, including Unlawful Detainer Clinic from Legal Aid Society of San Diego and Small Claims Mediator for the Hall of Justice. He began his career working in civil litigation before committing heavily to plaintiff-side employment law. Specifically, Mr. Ahadzadeh has significant experience litigating both class action lawsuits and advocating for victims of individual FEHA violations. He is admitted to practice in the State of California, the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California, and the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California.

Employment

Attorney, Ferraro Vega Employment Lawyers, Inc. (2026-Present)

Law Clerk, Hogue & Belong, APC (2021-2024)

Law Clerk, Garcia Hong Law, (2020)

Law Clerk, Mara Law Firm, PC (2020)

Circulation Clerk, California Western School of Law Library (2019-2021)

Organizations

Applicant, Welsh Inn of Court (2026)

San Diego County Bar Association (2019 to Present)
Annual Dinner Committee, Lawyers Club of San Diego (2019-2020)
Student Bar Association, CWSL, *Vice President* (2019-2020)

Publications

Ahadzadeh, Nicolas. "Bridging the Financial Gap from Law School Graduate to Sole Practitioner." American Bar Association. MONEY TALKS: Financial Issues in Law Practice (January February 2022).
Ahadzadeh, Nicolas. "Using Legal Research to Stay Ahead of the Curve." Thomson Reuters. Law School Survival Guide (2021).

Awards

Lawyers of Distinction, "Best of the Best" Nominee (2026).
California Western School of Law, Distinguished Advocate Award, Trial (2020)
California Western School of Law, Distinguished Advocate Award, Trial (2019)
California Western School of Law, Distinguished Advocate Award, Negotiations (2019)

Cesar Yuriar

California State Bar No. ____ (awaiting admission)

Education

University of San Diego, School of Law (J.D.)
University of California, Irvine (B.A.)

Cesar obtained his dual undergraduate degrees from the University of California, Irvine. He went on to earn his J.D. from the University of San Diego, School of Law. During law school, Cesar earned approval to practice California state law as a Certified Law Student and represented a wide variety of clients as part of the Civil Legal Clinic. He was recognized for his oral advocacy skills, having earned "2nd Best Oral Advocate" during the Alumni Torts Moot Court Tournament. Cesar also actively served on the executive boards for USD's International Law Society and La Raza. He is currently awaiting admission to practice law in the State of California.

Employment

Employment Rights Case Analyst, Associate Attorney, Ferraro Vega Employment Lawyers, Inc. (2025-Present)
Senior Legal Analyst, California Department of Justice, Office of the Attorney General (2023-2025)
Data Entry Specialist, Housing Inspector, Process Server, Legal Aid Society of San Diego (2018 - 2022)
Law Writer, The Athanassious Law Office, PC (2017)
Certified Legal Intern, Civil Clinic, University of San Diego, School of Law (2014, 2016)
Judicial Clerk, EEOC (2015)
Law Clerk, Gruenberg Law (2015)

Law Clerk, U.S. Department of Labor (2014)

OF COUNSEL ATTORNEYS

Rick A. Waltman, Esq.

Rick Waltman Law, APC

California State Bar No. 306463 (admitted 2015)

Education

University of San Diego School of Law (J.D., *cum laude*, *San Diego Law Review*)

University of Minnesota (B.S. Chemistry)

During law school, Mr. Waltman externed for Judge Thomas J. Whelan in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California, worked for the California Attorney General's Office as a clerk, and was a research assistant to Professor Robert Fellmeth, Price Professor of Public Interest Law.

Employment

Of Counsel, Ferraro Vega Employment Lawyers (January 2026 to present)

Attorney and Principal, Rick Waltman Law, APC (October 2020 to present)

Attorney, Buchalter (2018 to 2020)

Attorney, Gordon Rees Scully Mansukhani (2016 to 2018)

Prior to starting with the firm, Mr. Waltman has run his own practice at Rick Waltman Law, APC, worked in the employment law practice groups of Gordon Rees and Buchalter, where he advised companies, drafted employee policies and agreements, and defended employers in class action and PAGA litigation.

Awards

Super Lawyers "Rising Star" in the field of Employment Law and Class Actions (2018 to 2019, 2022-2025)

PARALEGALS & STAFF

Marissa Rodriguez

Paralegal

Employment

Paralegal, Ferraro Vega Employment Lawyers, Inc. (2024 to Present)

Paralegal, Hoffman & Forde Attorneys at Law (2022 – 2023)

Legal Assistant/Paralegal, Mesnik Law Group (2019 – 2022)

Education

California State University, Chico (Bachelor of Arts)

Isabel Tostado

Paralegal

Employment

Paralegal, Ferraro Vega Employment Lawyers, Inc. (2025 to present)

Paralegal, J. Doling Law, PC. (2019 – 2024)

Paralegal, Doling Shaw & Hanover, APC (2016 – 2019)

Paralegal, Law Offices of Jenny L. Doling, APLC (2008 – 2016)

Education

Kaplan University, Palm Springs (Associate of Science)

Leah Carcione

Paralegal

Employment

Paralegal, Ferraro Vega Employment Lawyers (November 2025 to Present)

Paralegal, Wilshire Law Firm, (May 2024 – October 2025)

Paralegal, The Markham Law Firm, (August 2017 – April 2024)

Education

University of San Diego School of Law, (ABA Paralegal Certificate)

Jennifer Steele

Paralegal

Employment

Paralegal, Ferraro Vega Employment Lawyers (January 2026 to Present)

Paralegal, Hogue and Belong APC, (August 2025 – January 2026)

Education

University of California Los Angeles, (Bachelor of Arts, Sociology)

University of San Diego School of Law, (ABA Paralegal Certificate)

Raquel Gerardo

Paralegal

Employment

Paralegal, Ferraro Vega Employment Lawyers (January 2026 to Present)

Legal Assistant, Mara Law Firm (February 2025 – January 2026)

Education

Brigham Young University- Idaho, (Bachelor of Science, Business Management with an emphasis in Supply Chain)

Leslee Soria Alvarado

Paralegal

Employment

Paralegal, Ferraro Vega Employment Lawyers (January 2026 to Present)

Legal Assistant, Hogue & Belong (July 2025 to January 2026)

Education

University of California, San Diego (Bachelor of Arts, Political Science: Public Law)

Daniel Ramaswamy

Paralegal

Employment

Paralegal, Ferraro Vega Employment Lawyers (May 2026 to Present)

Paralegal, Fischer & Phinney (January 2025 to April 2026)

Education

University of California, San Diego (Bachelor of Arts, Philosophy)

Secretaries and legal assistants not listed.

FORMER ATTORNEYS

David X. Lin, Esq.

Northwestern University School of Law (J.D.)

Elida M. Espinoza, Esq.

California Western School of Law (J.D., 2016)

California State Bar No. 314001 (admitted 2017)

Rayne Brown, Esq.

University of San Diego School of Law (J.D., 2021)

California State Bar No. 342011 (admitted 2021)

Mariela R. Romo, Esq.

University of San Diego School of Law (J.D.)

University of California, Santa Barbara (B.A. Political Science)

Xavier L. Woodford, Esq.

Thomas Jefferson School of Law (J.D.)

Rutgers University – New Brunswick (B.A.)

Elyssa Martinez, Esq.

University of San Diego School of Law (J.D.)

Grand Canyon University (B.A.)

CLASS & REPRESENTATIVE ACTIONS

Alexa Britt v. San Diego Hotel Company LLC, San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 24CU012268C (Hon. Judy S. Bae) (June 5, 2026)

Kazzandra Montoya v. Child Development Associates Incorporated, San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2024-00029581-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Loren Freestone) (June 5, 2026)

Melissa Pope, et al. v. AGI Post, Inc., et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 24CU005384C (Hon. Loren Freestone) (May 18, 2026)

Napoleon Wilson v. Sullivan Properties Inc. DBA Fairgrove Property Management, San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 24CL013656C (Hon. Michael T. Smyth) (May 13, 2026)

Daisy Macias, et al. v. Planned Parenthood of the Pacific Southwest, San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 25CU025541C (Hon. Michael T. Smyth) (May 5, 2026)

Eneil Stone v. International Building Materials, LLC, Thurston County Sup. Ct. Case No. 24-2-03195-34 (Hon. Chris Lanese) (May 1, 2026)

Daniel Fabian v. Dealer Tire LLC, San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00052611-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Wendy M. Behan) (May 1, 2026)

Filbert Namu v. All-Pro Bail Bonds Inc., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 25CU039133C (Hon. Gregory W. Pollack) (May 1, 2026)

Amos Maldonado v. Funko LLC, San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2024-00017602-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Marcella O. McLaughlin) (May 1, 2026)

Franco Masada v. Ferry International LLC, San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 24CU009941C (Hon. Katherine A. Bacal) (May 1, 2026)

Carmina Torres v. First Meridian Home Care Services, Inc. DBA Meridian Home Care LLC, San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 24CU016862C (Hon. Carolyn M. Caietti) (April 29, 2026)

Christopher Coney v. DMSI Staffing LLC, et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 25CU011805C (Hon. Michael D. Washington) (April 24, 2026)

Randi Sycks v. Incyte Pathology, Inc., Spokane County Sup. Ct. Case No. 24-2-02294-32 (Hon. Breean Beggs) (April 23, 2026)

Michael E. Osley, Jr. v. Bandon Fitness [Texas], Inc., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2024-00011471-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Evan P. Kirvin) (April 21, 2026)

Maria Fuoco v. TDIC Insurance Solutions, Sacramento County Sup. Ct. Case No. 24CV025040 (Hon. Lauri A. Damrell) (April 17, 2026)

Glory Orekoya v. Inspyr Solutions LLC, et al., Alameda County Sup. Ct. Case No. 24CV085153 (Hon. S. Raj Chatterjee) (April 14, 2026)

Daniel Munoz v. ARS REI USA Corp., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 24CU013657C (Hon. Blaine K. Bowman) (April 3, 2026)

Martin Aldrete, et al. v. JAL Equity Corp. DBA Marketing.com, et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 24CU003448C (Hon. Wendy M. Behan) (April 3, 2026)

Mason Griffin v. JKB Financial, Inc., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 25CU017449C (Hon. Evan P. Kirvin) (April 1, 2026)

Charles Madrid v. Grand America Hotels & Resorts, Inc., et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2024-00023471-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Blaine K. Bowman) (March 27, 2026)

Salvador Cruz v. Khanna Enterprises VI LP, et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 25CU014533C (Hon. Loren Freestone) (March 13, 2026)

Zachary Lacono v. CC of San Diego, Inc., et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2024-00029215-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Marcella O. McLaughlin) (March 6, 2026)

Eloina Vigil v. SLH Escondido Manager, LLC, San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2024-00013517-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Loren Freestone) (March 5, 2026)

Matthew Falcosky v. Consolidated Electrical Distributors, Inc., King County Sup. Ct. Case No. 24-2-29691-3 (Hon. Suzanne Parisien) (February 27, 2026)

Carlos Marquez, et al. v. Naval Engineering Support Inc., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2024-00023814-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Katherine A. Bacal) (February 20, 2026)

Darby Churchill, et al. v. Interim Healthcare San Diego LLC, et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00032762-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Evan P. Kirvin) (February 6, 2026)

Abraham Iriarte v. KFM Restaurants LP, San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 24CU019915C (Hon. Gregory W. Pollack) (February 6, 2026)

Shawntay Ellison v. CHW Entertainment, Inc., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2024-00020465-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Loren Freestone) (February 6, 2026)

Charles Constantino v. Good Samaritan Shelter, Santa Barbara County Sup. Ct. Case No. 24CV04221 (Hon. James F. Rigali) (February 3, 2026)

Monica Velarde v. San Diego Imaging Management, Inc., et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2024-00030937-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Gregory W. Pollack) (January 30, 2026)

Emilie Hanne v. Unio Health Partners LLC, San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2024-00019901-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Euketa Oliver) (January 23, 2026)

Nieemah Jenkins v. ArcherAviation Operating Corp., et al., Alameda County Sup. Ct. Case No. 24CV086806 (Hon. Rebekah Evenson) (January 22, 2026)

Jose Martinez v. HES Commercial, Inc., et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 24CU000888C (Hon. Evan P. Kirvin) (January 21, 2026)

Neyly Becerra v. St. Madeleine Sophie's Center, San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2024-00007254-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Matthew C. Braner) (January 16, 2026)

James Woodruff v. Ormat Technologies, Inc., Imperial County Sup. Ct. Case No. ECU003647 (Hon. L. Brooks Anderholt) (January 15, 2026)

Sayprasith Phahongchanh v. Columbia Machine, Inc., Clark County Sup. Ct. Case No. 24-2-03542-06 (Hon. Gregory M. Gonzales) (January 14, 2026)

Zion Jackson v. Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles County Sup. Ct. Case No. 24STCV14085 (Hon. Laura A. Seigle) (January 12, 2026)

Brian Harris, et al. v. Securespace Management, LLC, San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2024-00023760-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Wendy M. Behan) (January 9, 2026)

Marcelina Pereyra, et al. v. GAT Airline Ground Support Inc., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2024-00000064-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Carolyn Caietti) (January 9, 2026)

Maria Bermudez, et al. v. Lendmark Financial Services LLC, San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 24CU013255C (Hon. Euketa Oliver) (January 9, 2026)

Loomer, et al. v. Vaagen Bros Lumber, Inc., United States District Court, Eastern District of Washington, Case No. 2 :24-cv-0206-TOR (Hon. Thomas O. Rice) (December 10, 2025)

Hung Nguyen v. DUAL North America, Inc., et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2024-00023462-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. James Mangione) (December 5, 2025)

Marie Macias v. Patterson Dental Supply, Inc., et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2024-00016055-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Marcella O. McLaughlin) (December 5, 2025)

Robert Frosio v. La Jolla Beach and Tennis Club Partners L.P., et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 24CU003072C (Hon. James Mangione) (November 26, 2025)

Dustin Bottomley, et al. v. Six Maritime, Inc., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2024-00018510-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Marcela O. McLaughlin) (November 21, 2025)

Arik Papa v. Geocon, Inc., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2024-00029093-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Wendy M. Behan) (November 14, 2025)

Maria Cisneros v. ISL Employees, Inc. dba Integral Senior Living, et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2024-00009110-CU-OE-NC (Hon. Michael D. Washington) (November 14, 2025)

Tonya Miller v. Cascadia Senior Living, LLC, Pierce County Sup. Ct. Case No. 23-2-11217-8 (Hon. Angelica Williams) (November 14, 2025)

Myrella Thomas, et al. v. ACES 2020 I, LLC, et al., Alameda County Sup. Ct. Case No. 24CV061880 (Hon. Somnath Raj Chatterjee) (November 4, 2025)

Renee Davin, et al. v. Rock Basin LLC, San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00038275-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Wendy M. Behan) (October 31, 2025)

Anton Louis Thompson v. Career Systems Development Corporation, et al., Sacramento County Sup. Ct. Case No. 24CV009265 (Hon. Jill H. Talley) (October 28, 2025)

Victor Fragosa, et al. v. Sudberry Properties, Inc., et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2024-00010679-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Matthew C. Braner) (October 24, 2025)

Irianny Ibarra v. Institutes of Health, LLC, et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 24CU008055C (Hon. Blaine K. Bowman) (October 10, 2025)

Martha Brito v. Ready America, Inc., et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2024-00016167-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Wendy M. Behan) (October 2, 2025)

Samantha Mendez, et al. v. AE Retail West LLC, et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00014789-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Judy S. Bae) (September 25, 2025)

Nick De Vera, et al. v. Leica Biosystems Imaging, Inc., et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00035127-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Gregory W. Pollack) (September 12, 2025)

Ray Dyer v. Kenny Brothers, Inc., et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00045013-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Gregory W. Pollack) (September 12, 2025)

Maria Galecio-Cruz v. Southern California Specialty Care, LLC, et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00009287-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Judy S. Bae) (September 5, 2025)

Onoray Davis Jr., et al. v. AllSafe Services, Inc., et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00054447-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Wendy M. Behan) (August 22, 2025)

Ashley Garcia v. Coastal Clinical & Management Services, Inc. et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2024-00016933-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Wendy M. Behan) (August 22, 2025)

Alejandro Esparza v. Otay Mesa Sales, Inc., et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00014957-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Richard S. Whitney) (August 20, 2025)

Shamonique Lashawn Malone-Boyd v. NuCO2 Management LLC, et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00043224-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Katherine A. Bacal) (August 8, 2025)

Maria Ramirez Tapia v. NakedMD Inc., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 24CL003956C (Hon. Loren Freestone) (August 7, 2025)

Sierra Pullum v. Arizona Leather Company, Inc., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00038544-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Wendy M. Behan) (August 1, 2025)

Keri Park v. EcoATM, LLC, San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00021318-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Wendy M. Behan) (August 1, 2025)

Linda Davis, et al. v. Sun Pacific Energy, Inc., King County Sup. Ct. Case No. 24-2-04616-0 SEA (Hon. Todd D. Tinker) (August 1, 2025)

Joseph Lagasse v. Alta Pest Control LLC, King County Sup. Ct. Case No. 24-2-10137-3 SEA (Hon. Kristin Ballinger) (July 18, 2025)

Michael Bradley v. The Crack Shack Enterprises, LLC et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 24CL000768C (Hon. Blaine K. Bowman) (July 16, 2025)

Troy Long, et al. v. Vicar Operating Inc., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00031023-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Wendy M. Behan) (July 11, 2025)

Noa Olvera v. American Recycling International Inc., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2024-00027297-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Joel R. Wohlfeil) (July 11, 2025)

Alejandra Gamino v. Nishiki Diner USA, Inc., et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 24CU000269C (Hon. Marcella O. McLaughlin) (June 26, 2025)

Paul Shelford v. Atlantic Aviation FBO Inc., et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00033584-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Carolyn Caietti) (May 23, 2025)

Nathaneal Taylor, et al. v. Hallcon Corporation, et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00021029-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Carolyn Caietti) (May 23, 2025)

Katherine Wishnick v. Big Daddy's Oil 22, Inc., et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00001414-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Judy S. Bae) (May 23, 2025)

Natalie DiTerlizzi v. V Shred, LLC, et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00023334-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Marcella O. McLaughlin) (May 16, 2025)

Yvonne Gonzalez, et al. v. West Marine Products, Inc., et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00017462-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Blaine K. Bowman) (May 9, 2025)

Kandace Battle, et al. v. California Clinic Management, LLC, et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00039498-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Loren G. Freestone) (May 9, 2025)

Rosa Yareli Figueroa v. Biolife Plasma Services L.P., et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00032681-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Katherine Bacal) (May 2, 2025)

Jailene Martinez v. Soapy Joe's Group, Inc., et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00053126-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Gregory W. Pollack) (April 18, 2025)

Sepher Flores, et al. v. U Gym, LLC, et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-000539848-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Joel R. Wohlfeil) (April 18, 2025)

Nataly Gomez v. Pie Venture, LLC, et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2022-00002648-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Gregory W. Pollack) (April 18, 2025)

Kody Hornburg, et al. v. Pacifica Companies, LLC, et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00002433-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Wendy H. Behan) (April 17, 2025)

Raul Gonzalez v. Simon Management Associates, LLC, et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00036919-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. James A. Mangione) (March 21, 2025)

Caitlin Ortiz v. AssuredPartners of California Insurance Services LLC, et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00043182-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. James A. Mangione) (March 21, 2025)

Erica Jones v. Bay City Equipment Industries, Inc., et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00046654-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Marcella O. McLaughlin) (March 14, 2025)

Trevor Morton v. Associated Microbreweries, LTD., dba Karl Strauss Brewing Company, et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 2020-00016542-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Katherine Bacal) (February 24, 2025)

Michael Del Toro v. Abzena (San Diego) Inc., et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00017443-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Joel R. Wohlfeil) (February 20, 2025)

Albert Federico v. A.S.I. Hastings, Inc., et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00012941-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Michael T. Smyth) (February 10, 2025)

Cesar Flores v. NextEra Energy Operating Services, LLC, et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00034497-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Richard S. Whitney) (February 7, 2025)

Brook Freeze v. MHX, LLC, et al., San Bernardino County Sup. Ct. Case No. CIVSB2205903 (Hon. Christian Towns) (February 6, 2025)

Lisset Tredo v. Ademco Inc., et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00027207-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Carolyn Caietti) (January 31, 2025)

Mariana Robles v. Louis Vuitton USA, Inc., et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2022-00042954-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Robert Longstreth) (January 29, 2025)

Irving Williams v. Trident Maritime Systems, LLC, et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00021186-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Marcella O. McLaughlin) (January 10, 2025)

Janeth Robledo v. Global Equity Finance Inc., et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2022-00023181-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Michael T. Smyth) (January 10, 2025)

Alexa Basnar v. Desert Ventures EWC1, LLC, et al., San Bernardino County Sup. Ct. Case No. CIVSB2307814 (Hon. Christian Towns) (January 6, 2025)

Jaime De La O v. Scout Distribution LLC, et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00030227-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Carolyn M. Caietti) (December 20, 2024)

Hannah Lightfoot v. Dispatchhealth Management, LLC, et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00031018-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Blaine K. Bowman) (November 22, 2024)

Carlos Lira v. Anheuser-Busch, LLC, San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00038074-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Matthew C. Braner) (November 18, 2024)

Raquel Felix v. Innovative Emergency Management, Inc., et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00012142-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Matthew C. Braner) (October 25, 2024)

Ricardo Flores v. Skaggs Mission Support Specialists, LLC, et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00051810-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Matthew C. Braner) (October 25, 2024)

Ashley Nunez Estrada v. Baxter Hotel Group, Inc., et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00052417-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Katherine A. Bacal) (October 16, 2024)

Phuong Tran, et al. v. Johnson Matthey, Inc., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00029095-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Richard S. Whitney) (October 4, 2024)

Caitlin Raymond v. Alphatec Spine, Inc., et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00012914-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Joel Wohlfeil) (October 4, 2024)

Jessica Hayward v. Aztec Shops, LTD., et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00007756-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Carolyn Caietti) (September 26, 2024)

Ralph Shakespeare v. Iron Wall Security, Inc., et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00006539-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Loren G. Freestone) (September 26, 2024)

Michael Gibbs v. ASA Carlton, Inc., et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00007130-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Richard S. Whitney) (September 23, 2024)

Eloy Herrera v. Calpine Operating Services Company, Inc., et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00007065-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Blaine K. Bowman) (September 20, 2024)

Robert Bennett v. Patriot Environmental Services Inc., et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2022-00044044-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Matthew C. Braner) (September 13, 2024)

Aramburo v. Jacksons Food Stores, Inc., et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00009655-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Marcella O. McLaughlin) (September 10, 2024)

Dustin Evers v. LZB Retail, Inc., D/B/A La-Z-Boy, et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2021-00047960-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. James A. Mangione) (September 5, 2024)

Semira Trujillo v. FFC San Diego, LLC, et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2022-00046517-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Carolyn Caietti) (September 5, 2024)

Anthony Davide v. SFFIT Ventures LLC, et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2022-00036078-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Michael T. Smyth) (August 23, 2024)

Isaiah Harris v. Austal USA LLC, San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00034540-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. James A Mangione) (August 2, 2024)

Raggy Sarkis v. Glory Global Solutions, Inc., et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00021170-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Richard S. Whitney) (August 2, 2024)

Roberto Mendez v. Deployed Services, LLC, et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00036201-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Blaine K. Bowman) (July 12, 2024)

Kevin Dougan v. Centerplate Inc., et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2022-00040792-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Carolyn M. Caietti) (June 28, 2024)

Jennifer Andrade v. Sombrero Cor, Inc., et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00043518-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Richard S. Whitney) (June 26, 2024)

Juan Weason v. Plastic Express, et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2022-00022203-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Richard S. Whitney) (June 24, 2024)

Jerardo Villa v. Investment Concepts, Inc., Ventura County Sup. Ct. Case No. 56-2022-00572556-CU-OE-VTA (Hon. Henry Walsh) (June 20, 2024)

Manuel Fernandez v. VLS Environmental Solutions, LLC, et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00021038-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Richard S. Whitney) (June 7, 2024)

Desiree Berry v. TD Ameritrade, Inc., et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2022-00004165-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Blaine K. Bowman) (June 7, 2024)

Jacob Becerra v. Michael Kors Stores (California), LLC, et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2022-00021768-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Wendy M. Behan) (May 29, 2024)

Whitney Begle v. R.W. Selby & Co., Inc., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2022-00017612-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Richard S. Whitney) (May 10, 2024)

Charlie McElhanon v. McLane/SunEast, Inc., San Bernardino County Sup. Ct. Case No. CIVSB2214190 (Hon. Joseph T. Ortiz) (May 16, 2024)

Roberto Hernandez v. All One God Faith, Inc. d/b/a Dr. Bronner's Magic Soap, San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00008069-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Blaine K. Bowman) (May 10, 2024)

Jesus Salazar v. Westcott Enterprises, Inc., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2022-00048854-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Robert Longstreth) (May 9, 2024)

Elizabeth Tijero, et al. v. Imperial Beach Community Clinic, San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2022-00042973-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Loren G. Freestone) (April 10, 2024)

Jenelle Olea, et al. v. The Stepping Stones Group LLC, et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2022-00040884-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Kenneth J. Medel) (April 12, 2024)

Jaime Collins, et al. v. Maximus Human Services, Inc., et al., Los Angeles County Sup. Ct. Case No. 19STCV17916 (Hon. Carolyn B. Kuhl) (April 4, 2024)

Gabriel Lafarga v. G.I. Trucking Company d/b/a Estes West, et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2022-00028993-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Gregory W. Pollack) (March 15, 2024)

Madelynn Black v. EWC East Bay, Inc., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2022-00009708-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Kenneth J. Medel) (March 12, 2024)

Seth Chance v. Colonna's Shipyard Incorporated, San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2022-00018968-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Gregory W. Pollack) (March 8, 2024)

Samuel Medina v. Prime Residential, San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2023-00047293-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Katherine Bacal) (February 26, 2024)

Isle Robles v. Anzar Enterprises Inc., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2021-00052808-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Richard S. Whitney) (February 22, 2024)

Gutierrez v. Redi-Carpet Sales of California, LLC, San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2022-00021779-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Loren G. Freestone) (February 9, 2024)

Tadena-Chua v. Acumen Fiscal Agent LLC, San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2021-00052766-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Marcella O. McLaughlin) (December 19, 2023)

Ohler v. Cluckin Inc. et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2021-00053292-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Katherine Bacal) (December 1, 2023)

Cardenas v. Under Armour Retail, Inc., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2022-00026843-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Kenneth J. Medel) (November 30, 2023)

Caro-Santiago et al. v. Southwest Key Program, San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2022-00021991-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Marcella O. McLaughlin) (November 17, 2023)

Nguyen v. TriLink Biotechnologies, LLC, San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2022-00019578-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Marcella O. McLaughlin) (November 2, 2023)

Sanz et al. v. Sterling Jewelers, Inc. et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2022-00015148-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Gregory Pollack) (October 13, 2023)

Perez v. The GEO Group, Inc. et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2022-0000067-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Joel R. Wohlfeil) (October 6, 2023)

Reyes v. Parkside Lending, LLC, San Diego County Sup. Ct. Case No. 37-2022-00022628-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Joel R. Wohlfeil) (June 12, 2023)

Wood v. 2018HMO LLC (dba Hikei Modern Cannabis), San Diego County Sup. Ct. 37-2021-00053035-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Carolyn M. Caietti) (April 14, 2023)

Garcia v. STG International, Inc., U.S. Dist. Ct., S.D. Cal. No. 20-CV-1701-AJB (Hon. Anthony J. Battaglia) (April 13, 2023)

Belmontez-Carillo v. Metropolitan Area Advisory Committee, San Diego County Sup. Ct., 37-2019-00054227-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Eddie C. Sturgeon) (February 24, 2023)

Chowning, et al. v. Freedom Mortgage Corp., San Diego County Sup. Ct., 37-2022-00005613-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Matthew C. Braner) (February 16, 2023)

Abid v. TEEMA, Inc., San Diego County Sup. Ct., 37-2021-00039986-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Matthew C. Braner) (October 14, 2022)

Blount v. Host Healthcare, Inc., U.S. Dist. Ct., S.D. Cal., No. 21-CV-310-MMA (Hon. Michael M. Anello) (April 12, 2022)

Ramirez v. Towne Park, LLC, San Diego County Sup. Ct., No. 37-2020-00003942-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Katherine A. Bacal) (February 18, 2022)

Loreto v. General Dynamics Information Technology, Inc., U.S. Dist. Ct., S.D. Cal., No. 19-CV-0166-GPC (Hon. Gonzalo P. Curiel) (January 28, 2022)

Knox v. Planet Fitness, Inc., San Diego County Sup. Ct., No. 37-2019-00043225-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Carolyn M. Caietti) (August 6, 2021)

Egan et al. v. Premier Healthcare Services, LLC, San Diego County Sup. Ct., 37-2019-00020223-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Ronald L. Styn) (January 29, 2021)

Jimenez v. Reyes Holdings, LLC, San Diego County Sup. Ct., No. 37-2019-00051577-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Joel R. Wohlfeil) (January 15, 2021)

Rojas v. Constellation Homebuilder Systems, et al., San Diego County Sup. Ct., No. 37-2019-00035229-CU-OE-CTL (Hon. Katherine A. Bacal) (December 11, 2020)

Sanchez, et al. v. Lodi Memorial Hospital Association, San Joaquin County Sup. Ct., No. STK-CV-UEO-2019-09557 (Hon. Roger Ross) (December 11, 2020)

Soto, et al. v. Bonita Packing Co., Santa Barbara County Sup. Ct., No. 19CV02543 (Hon. Timothy J. Staffel) (October 28, 2020)

EXHIBIT 2

LAFFEY MATRIX

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			Years Out of Law School *				
Year	Adjustmt Factor**	Paralegal/ Law Clerk	1-3	4-7	8-10	11-19	20 +
6/01/25- 5/31/26	1.075336	\$277	\$508	\$625	\$902	\$1,019	\$1,227
6/01/24- 5/31/25	1.080182	\$258	\$473	\$581	\$839	\$948	\$1,141
6/01/23- 5/31/24	1.059295	\$239	\$437	\$538	\$777	\$878	\$1,057
6/01/22- 5/31/23	1.085091	\$225	\$413	\$508	\$733	\$829	\$997
6/01/21- 5/31/22	1.006053	\$208	\$381	\$468	\$676	\$764	\$919
6/01/20- 5/31/21	1.015894	\$206	\$378	\$465	\$672	\$759	\$914
6/01/19- 5/31/20	1.0049	\$203	\$372	\$458	\$661	\$747	\$899
6/01/18- 5/31/19	1.0350	\$202	\$371	\$455	\$658	\$742	\$894
6/01/17- 5/31/18	1.0463	\$196	\$359	\$440	\$636	\$717	\$864
6/01/16- 5/31/17	1.0369	\$187	\$343	\$421	\$608	\$685	\$826
6/01/15- 5/31/16	1.0089	\$180	\$331	\$406	\$586	\$661	\$796
6/01/14- 5/31/15	1.0235	\$179	\$328	\$402	\$581	\$655	\$789
6/01/13- 5/31/14	1.0244	\$175	\$320	\$393	\$567	\$640	\$771
6/01/12- 5/31/13	1.0258	\$170	\$312	\$383	\$554	\$625	\$753
6/01/11- 5/31/12	1.0352	\$166	\$305	\$374	\$540	\$609	\$734
6/01/10- 5/31/11	1.0337	\$161	\$294	\$361	\$522	\$589	\$709
6/01/09- 5/31/10	1.0220	\$155	\$285	\$349	\$505	\$569	\$686
6/01/08- 5/31/09	1.0399	\$152	\$279	\$342	\$494	\$557	\$671
6/01/07-5/31/08	1.0516	\$146	\$268	\$329	\$475	\$536	\$645
6/01/06-5/31/07	1.0256	\$139	\$255	\$313	\$452	\$509	\$614
6/1/05-5/31/06	1.0427	\$136	\$249	\$305	\$441	\$497	\$598
6/1/04-5/31/05	1.0455	\$130	\$239	\$293	\$423	\$476	\$574
6/1/03-6/1/04	1.0507	\$124	\$228	\$280	\$405	\$456	\$549
6/1/02-5/31/03	1.0727	\$118	\$217	\$267	\$385	\$434	\$522
6/1/01-5/31/02	1.0407	\$110	\$203	\$249	\$359	\$404	\$487
6/1/00-5/31/01	1.0529	\$106	\$195	\$239	\$345	\$388	\$468
6/1/99-5/31/00	1.0491	\$101	\$185	\$227	\$328	\$369	\$444
6/1/98-5/31/99	1.0439	\$96	\$176	\$216	\$312	\$352	\$424
6/1/97-5/31/98	1.0419	\$92	\$169	\$207	\$299	\$337	\$406

6/1/96-5/31/97	1.0396	\$88	\$162	\$198	\$287	\$323	\$389
6/1/95-5/31/96	1.032	\$85	\$155	\$191	\$276	\$311	\$375
6/1/94-5/31/95	1.0237	\$82	\$151	\$185	\$267	\$301	\$363

The methodology of calculation and benchmarking for this Updated Laffey Matrix has been approved in a number of cases. See, e.g., *DL v. District of Columbia*, 267 F.Supp.3d 55, 69 (D.D.C. 2017)

* $\frac{1}{2}$ Years Out of Law School $\frac{1}{2}$ is calculated from June 1 of each year, when most law students graduate. $\frac{1}{2}$ 1-3" includes an attorney in his 1st, 2nd and 3rd years of practice, measured from date of graduation (June 1). $\frac{1}{2}$ 4-7" applies to attorneys in their 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th years of practice. An attorney who graduated in May 1996 would be in tier $\frac{1}{2}$ 1-3" from June 1, 1996 until May 31, 1999, would move into tier $\frac{1}{2}$ 4-7" on June 1, 1999, and tier $\frac{1}{2}$ 8-10" on June 1, 2003.

** The Adjustment Factor refers to the nation-wide Legal Services Component of the Consumer Price Index produced by the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the United States Department of Labor.

EXHIBIT 3

2025 EDITION

Hourly Rates in Am Law 100[®] Firms:

**Increases and
Key Drivers**

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¹ The AM LAW 100 is a registered trademark of ALM Global Properties, LLC, which has no affiliation with Brightflag or this report.

Introduction

Outside counsel rate increases continue to be an anxiety-inducing year-end ritual. While these conversations are inevitable, having the data you need to best negotiate and strengthen relationships with your outside counsel is critical.

Our analysis of 2025 rates shows that, while the pace of growth has slowed from last year's historic surge, firms continue to request and realize substantial year-over-year increases. This translates into continued upward pressure on outside counsel spend.

This year's report provides updated benchmarks on timekeeper rates across Am Law® 100 firms and examines the drivers that most influence those rates: firm ranking, practice area, geography, and resourcing. Armed with these insights, in-house teams can engage in more informed rate negotiations, design smarter resourcing strategies, and ensure their budgets deliver maximum value.

In addition, we've included a special section on how law firms are beginning to integrate artificial intelligence into their operations—and the potential implications for resourcing and pricing models in the years ahead.



Michael Dineen

Michael Dineen
VP of Data Science,
Brightflag



Sarah Scales

Sarah Scales
Head of Product Marketing,
Brightflag

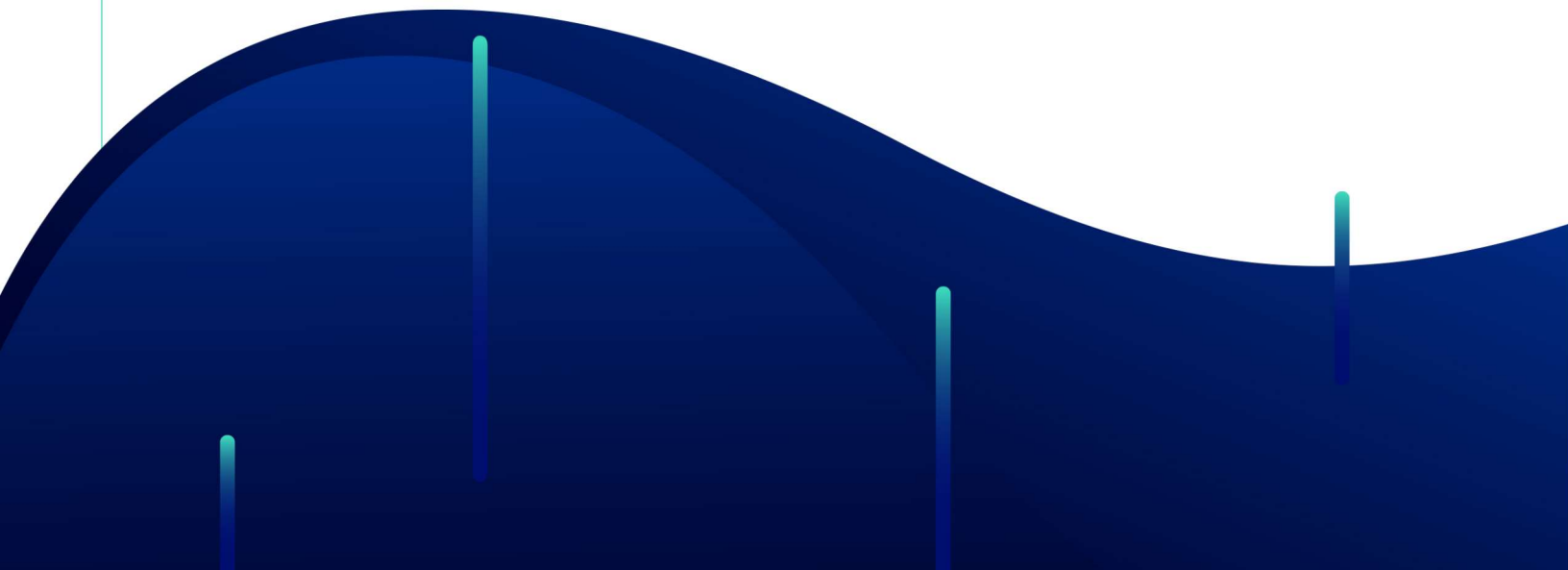
Methodology



This report analyzes billed rates from the Am Law® 100 — the 100 highest-revenue U.S. law firms, as ranked by ALM.¹ Brightflag's dataset reflects billions of dollars in annual outside counsel spend.

For the 2025 analysis, billed rates from January 1 through June 30, 2025 were included. For other years, full-year data were used. All figures are based on billed rates (the actual rates invoiced by firms), rather than rack rates or requested increases, providing an accurate reflection of what in-house teams are paying.

¹ ALM Global Properties, LLC is the owner of U.S. Trademark Registration No. 2313571 for the mark "THE Am Law® 100".

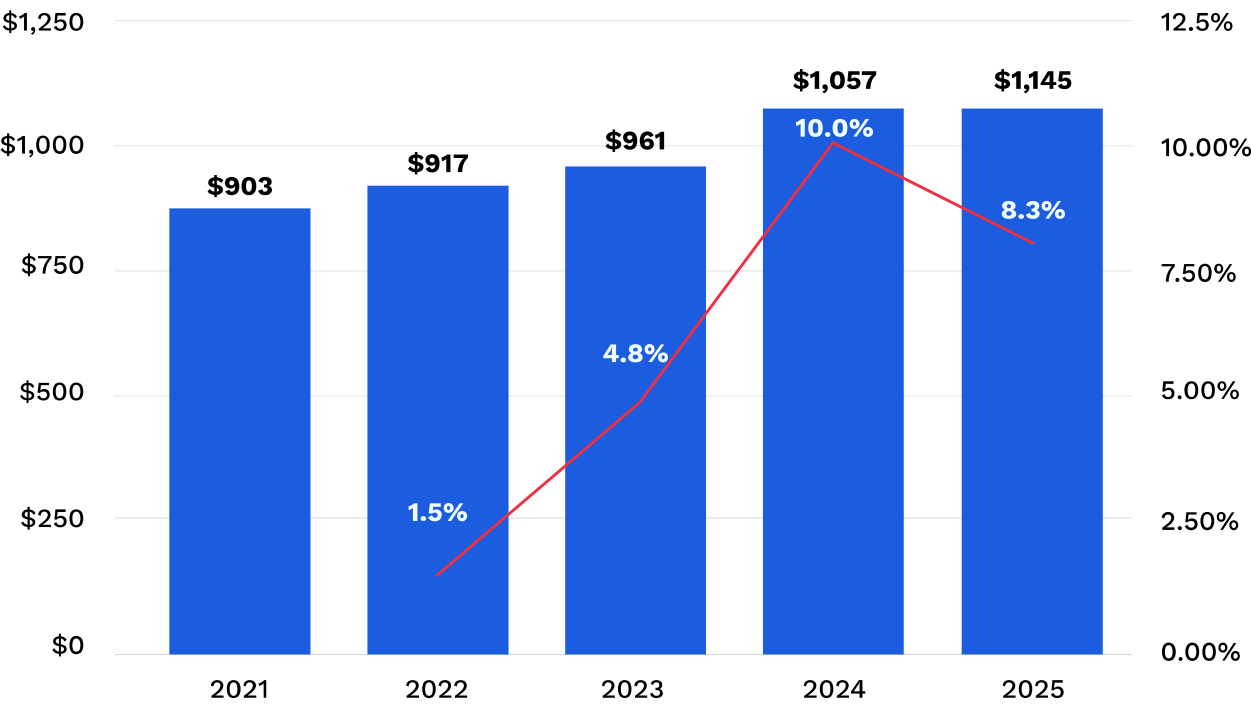


Rate Increases

The blended hourly rate among the Am Law® 100 rose by 8.3% in 2025, reaching \$1,145 per hour.

While this increase is lower than 2024’s historic 10% jump, it remains nearly double the growth of 2023 (4.8%).

Change in Blended Rates in Top 100 Firms ■ Blended Rate — Year-over-year Change



These figures underscore a clear trend: even as inflation moderates, firms continue to push through rate increases at levels that outpace broader economic conditions.

The Key Drivers of Rates

Annual rate increases place continued pressure on legal budgets, and it can feel as though in-house teams have little choice but to accept them. In reality, legal departments do have levers to pull — starting with decisions about which outside counsel firms to engage and how matters are resourced.

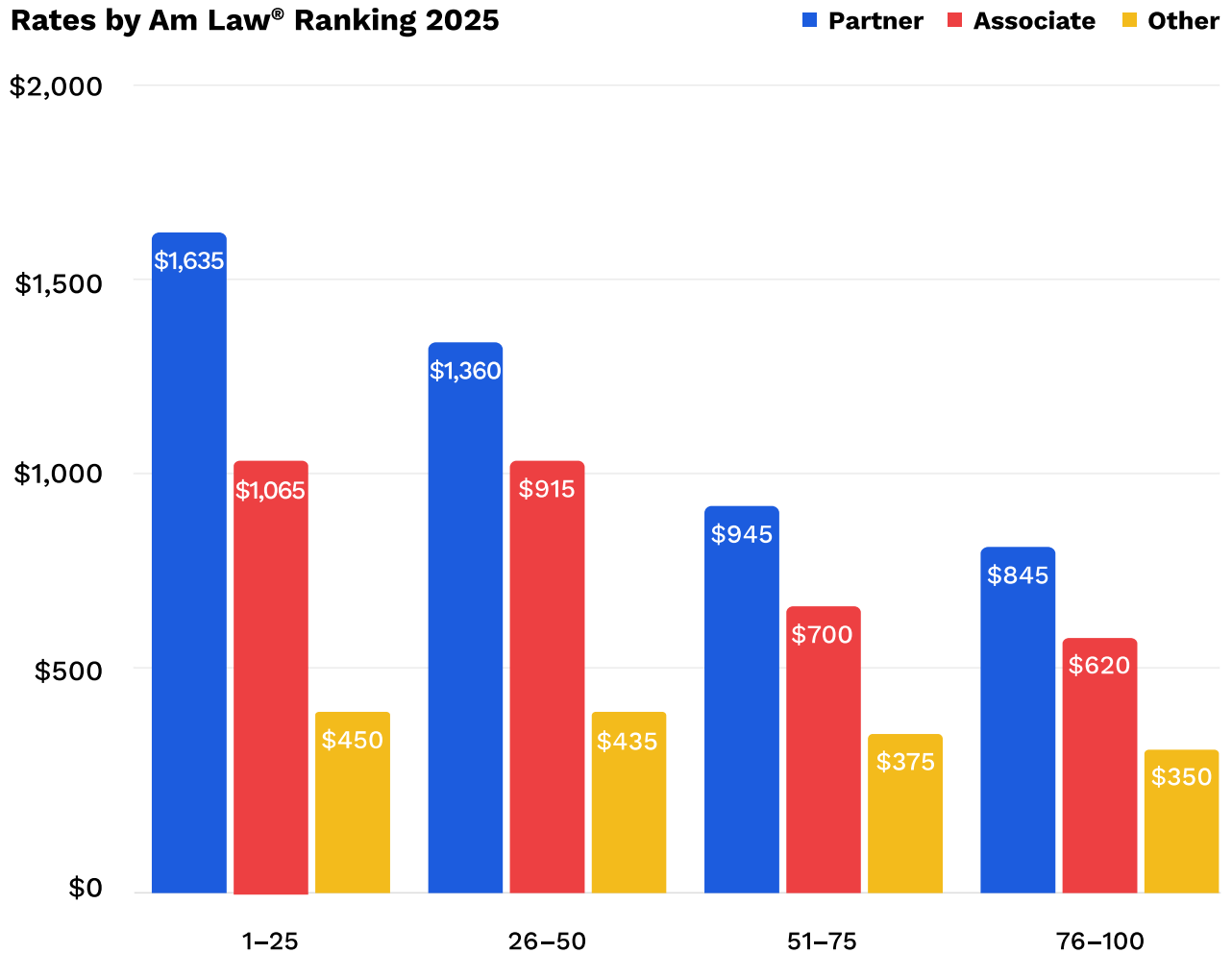
The data shows that firm ranking, practice area, geography, and resourcing all play a role in determining costs. By taking these drivers into account, in-house teams can benefit from the expertise and trust they've built with existing outside counsel where it matters, while also identifying opportunities to stretch their budgets further.

In the following sections, we explore each of these drivers and share insights to help legal departments make informed, cost-conscious decisions regarding which outside counsel firms to engage and how matters are resourced.

Firm Size

Firm ranking remains one of the strongest predictors of hourly rates. In 2025, partners at the top 25 firms charged an average of **\$1,635 per hour**, nearly double the **\$845 average at firms ranked 76–100**. Associates at top 25 firms billed **\$1,065 per hour**, outpacing partner rates at the bottom half of the list.

Rates by Am Law® Ranking 2025



This data highlights the premium commanded by top-ranked firms and the potential savings available by reallocating lower-risk or routine work to smaller firms, even within the Am Law® 100.

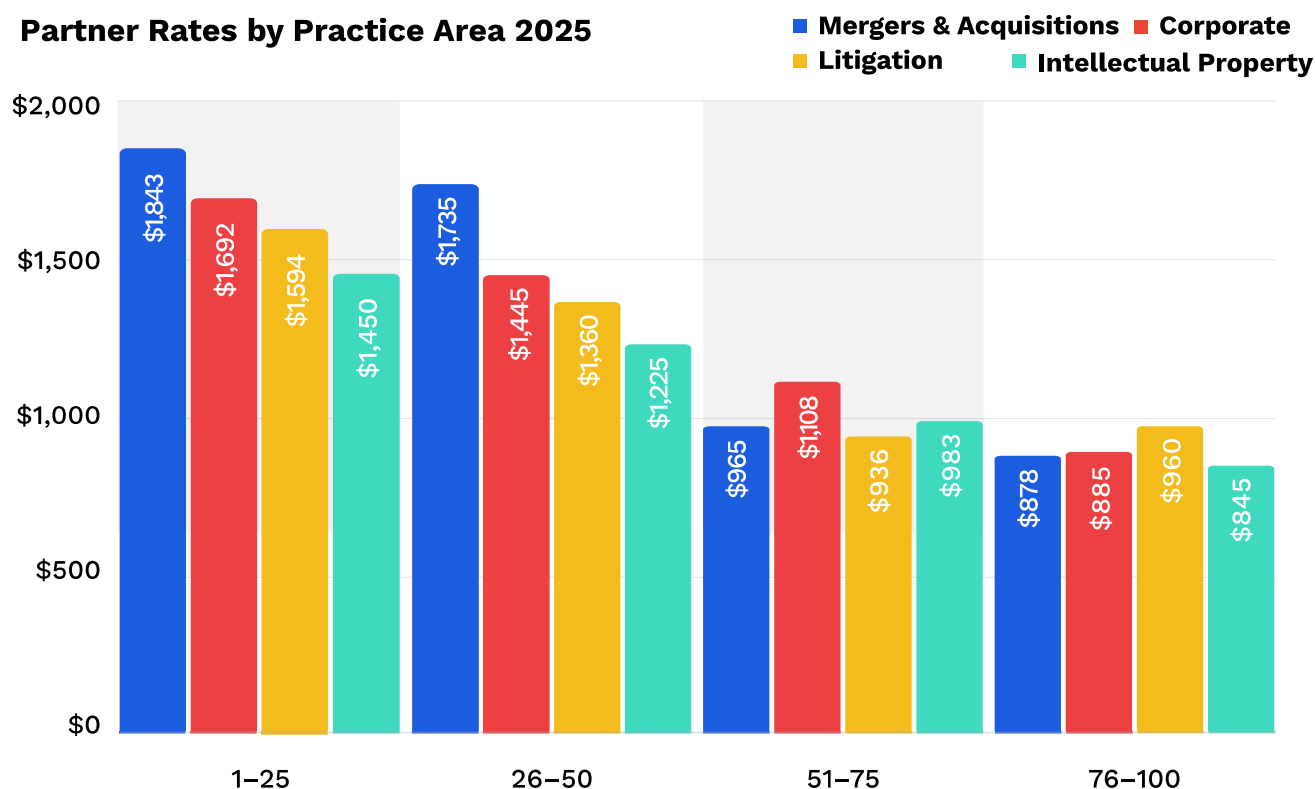
Practice Area

M&A and corporate work remain the highest-priced practice areas. In 2025, M&A partners at top-25 firms billed **\$1,843 per hour**, a **9.7% increase from 2024**, while corporate partners followed at **\$1,692 per hour**, up **8.1% year-over-year**.

Litigation rates also remain elevated, averaging **\$1,594** at top-25 firms and **\$1,360** at firms ranked 26–50, while partners in lower tiers billed under **\$1,000**.

While practice area sets the baseline for rates, in-house teams still have meaningful opportunities to influence cost — particularly in their choice of firm ranking, the staffing mix applied to matters, and, where appropriate, the use of ALSPs for repeatable work like document review.

Partner Rates by Practice Area 2025

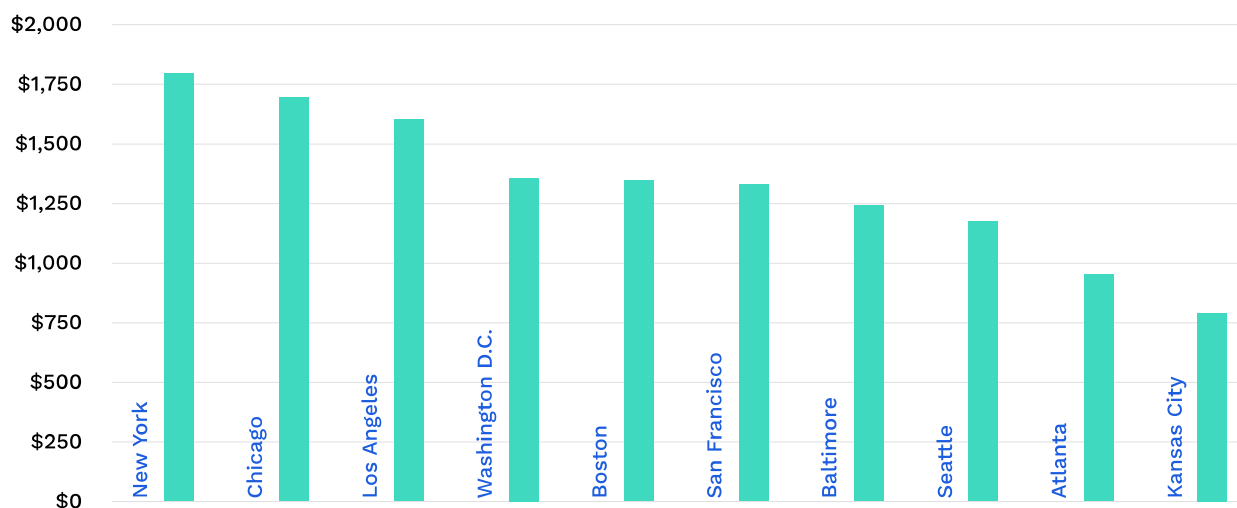
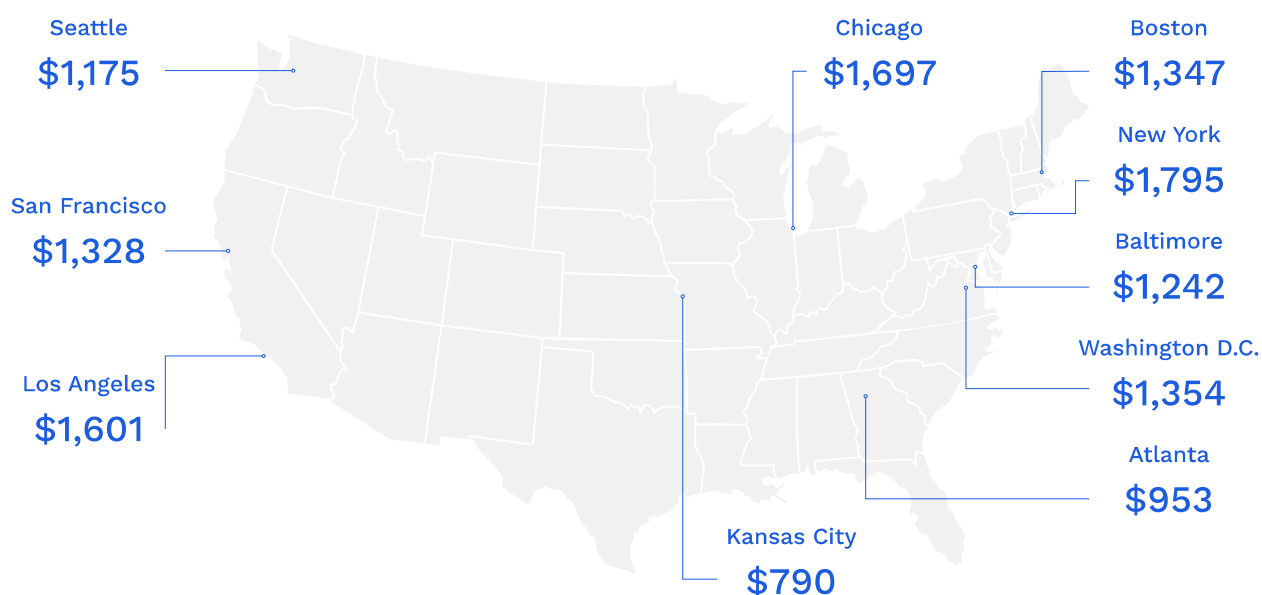


Geography

Rates continue to vary significantly by location. New York remains the most expensive market, with partners billing \$1,795 per hour. Chicago (\$1,697) and Los Angeles (\$1,318) followed closely.

In contrast, partners in Kansas City (\$790) billed at less than half the New York rate. Even within the Am Law® 100, geographic differences create meaningful opportunities for cost savings.

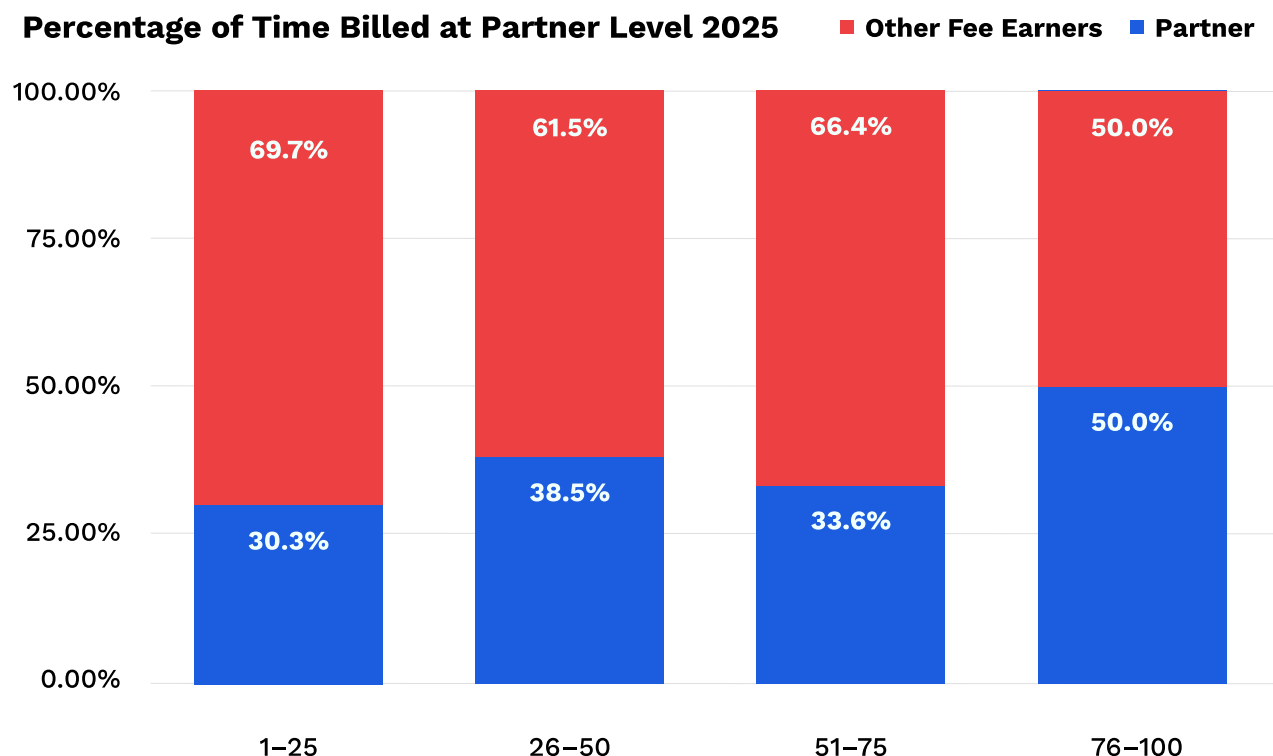
Partner Rates by Metro Area 2025



Resourcing Mix

How firms allocate work across partners and more junior fee-earners plays a critical role in determining overall legal spend.

In 2025, partners accounted for 30% of billable work at the top 25 law firms, compared to 50% at firms ranked 76–100. While the greater partner involvement at lower-ranked firms might raise cost concerns, their partner rates are nearly half those at top-tier firms on average, which keeps overall matter costs down.



The takeaway for in-house teams: heavy partner billing at top-tier firms has a much greater financial impact than similar allocations at lower-ranked firms, due to their higher hourly rates. Monitoring resourcing patterns remains critical to controlling overall spend.

Emerging Trends: AI's Impact on Law Firm Rates

Firms across the Am Law® 100 are investing in artificial intelligence (AI) technologies, primarily to drive internal efficiencies and streamline routine legal workflows. While widespread operational use of these tools is still in early stages, we are approaching a tipping point: one where AI will materially impact how firms deliver legal services and, by extension, how they price them.

For in-house teams, the implications are significant. AI is poised to reshape the foundational unit of legal pricing: the billable hour.



What's Changing?

AI is accelerating how legal work gets done. Tools that support research, drafting, and revision—traditionally the domain of junior associates—are already reducing the number of human hours required to complete legal tasks.

Over time, this will lead to:

- **Fewer hours billed per matter**, as more work is completed by AI.
- **Smaller teams staffed per matter**, particularly fewer junior associates.

On the surface, these trends may suggest cost savings for the legal department. But the reality may be more complex.



How Law Firms Are Likely to Respond

To maintain revenue, firms will likely adjust their pricing to offset reduced billable hours. After all, the value of resolving a matter remains unchanged—or may even increase—when AI enables faster, higher-quality, and more consistent outcomes. To capture that value, firms are expected to raise hourly rates and other commercial models to maintain or improve on their current margins.



Is the Hourly Rate Model at Risk?

Some have speculated that AI will hasten a broader shift away from hourly billing toward value-based pricing. While such a transformation is possible, it's unlikely to happen quickly. The billable hour remains deeply embedded in law firm economics, incentive structures, and client expectations.

That said, the economic pressure created by AI-enabled efficiency gains may create an opening for firms and clients to experiment more seriously with fixed-fee engagements and other alternative fee arrangements.



What In-House Teams Should Watch For

There are three early indicators that AI is starting to affect how law firms are getting work done, even if it might not show up in the form of reduced pricing:

1. **Reductions in total billed hours per matter**, particularly for repeatable work.
2. **Shifts in resourcing patterns**, such as fewer junior timekeepers and more partner time billed.
3. **Rate increase requests** that significantly outpace increases seen today.

In-house teams should track these patterns in their own data and use them to inform rate negotiations. Ultimately, clients and firms should share the value created by deploying AI to resolve matters.

While it may not always feel like it, legal departments are in the driver's seat when it comes to negotiating rates. Now more than ever, it pays to negotiate confidently and explore new partnerships when needed.

Brightflag is closely monitoring how AI adoption is shaping rates and resourcing, and will be among the first to reflect these shifts in future benchmarking data.

Recommendations

Armed with the insights in this report, in-house teams can enter rate negotiations with a clearer understanding of what constitutes an acceptable increase — and greater confidence in pushing back when proposals exceed market norms.

At the same time, effectively managing outside counsel rates is not a one-time exercise. To keep legal spend under control, teams need to take a structured, ongoing approach to monitoring and managing their law firm engagements.

Here are a few strategies that legal departments can apply to get — and stay — ahead of outside counsel costs:

Enforce agreed rates systematically.

Require firms to submit and adhere to approved timekeeper rates via an e-billing system.

Push back on excessive increases.

Use benchmarking data to challenge rate requests that exceed market norms.

Right-source strategically.

Reserve engagements with top firms for the highest-risk, most complex matters.

Redirect routine or lower-risk work to regional firms, ALSPs, or flexible legal talent.

Monitor resourcing closely.

Track the proportion of partner time billed and ensure staffing is aligned with the complexity and risk of the task at hand.

Keep an eye on AI adoption.

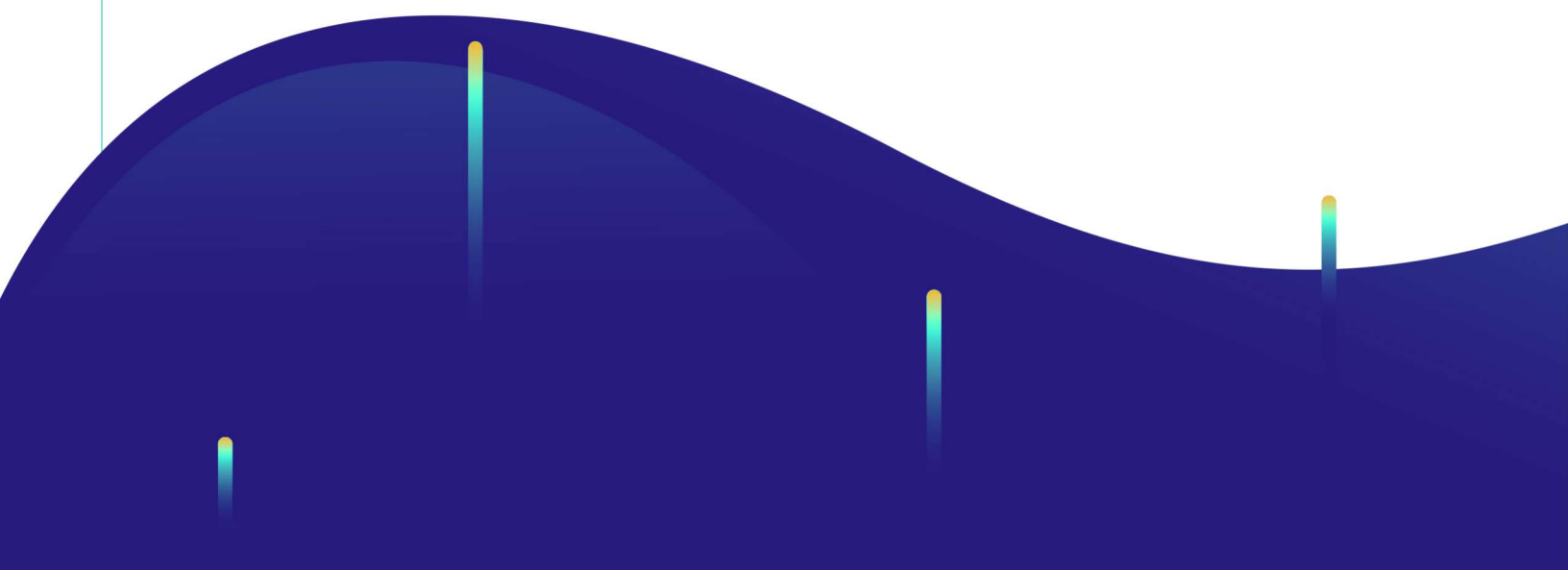
While still in early stages, AI is beginning to change how firms approach staffing and task completion. Over time, these changes may impact billing models and cost expectations.

For now, legal teams should begin asking firms how they're using AI and whether it's reducing manual work—especially for repeatable tasks like research or document review.

Closing

The forces shaping outside counsel costs in 2025 are largely familiar: firm ranking, practice area, geography, and resourcing remain the strongest drivers of rates. But in-house teams are not without influence. With the right data and a clear understanding of how and where work is delivered, legal departments can make smarter sourcing decisions and maximize the value received from their outside counsel spend.

While artificial intelligence is not yet a dominant factor in rate setting, its growing presence in law firm workflows suggests new questions will arise in future negotiations. Staying informed and engaged on these trends now will ensure your team is prepared as technology begins to reshape how legal services are delivered—and priced.



About Brightflag

Brightflag's enterprise legal management platform is the most effective solution for providing visibility into legal work and spend. The intuitive AI-powered platform makes in-house legal teams more productive by taking on time-consuming, manual, tasks related to invoicing, reporting, and matter management.

About the Authors



Michael Dineen
VP of Data Science, Brightflag

Michael leads data science at Brightflag and is passionate about AI and the future of legal operations. He is the architect of Brightflag's patented AI engine. Michael has a Masters in Machine Learning from DIT Dublin and an MLitt in Philosophy from the University of St Andrews in Scotland. Prior to Brightflag, Michael worked in consulting helping UK and Irish organizations leverage machine learning to enhance their operations and customer targeting.



Sarah Scales
Head of Product Marketing, Brightflag

Sarah leads product marketing at Brightflag, including developing thought leadership and research for the benefit of the in-house legal community. Sarah has previously worked as a product manager at Brightflag and a market researcher for a variety of public projects. Sarah has a Bachelor of Law and Political Science from Trinity College Dublin and a Masters in Product Management from Technological University Dublin.