

Daily Journal

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TOP 40 UNDER 40

For 22 years, the Daily Journal published an annual list of 20 leading California lawyers under age 40. In recent years, we came to realize there was no way 20 people could embody the breadth and depth of legal work being done by California's rising lawyers. They are working on issues affecting technology, health care, energy, criminal justice, civil rights and so much more.

For this list, our 23rd, we selected 40 lawyers. Doubling the size of the list did not diminish the quality

of the lawyers who appear on it. To the contrary. Our editors and reporters considered hundreds of lawyers. They represented every major practice type and specialty. Dozens of top-notch attorneys working on major issues of our time were left on the proverbial cutting room floor.

Our selection process centered on the impact of the lawyer's work. How has it affected the state of the law, a particular sector of industry or society? We also looked

at the candidate's impact on the legal community. Is he or she taking a leadership role within the firm, agency or organization? Are they active in bar groups and public service organizations?

As you read through this supplement, we think you'll agree that California's legal talent is some of the best you'll find anywhere in the world.

— The Editors

TOP 40 Under 40

Jennifer B. Bonneville

Steptoe & Johnson LLP

Los Angeles

Practice: Mass tort litigation defense

Age: 40

Bonneville regularly represents unpopular defendants such as major energy, petrochemical and agricultural chemical companies as they confront sympathetic plaintiffs' cases involving cancer, birth defects and drinking water contamination.

"You have to acknowledge the obvious," she said. "You might tell a jury, 'If people identified who they wanted to have Thanksgiving dinner with, it wouldn't be my client.' You are polite, you treat plaintiffs' counsel and plaintiffs courteously in depositions and in court. 'I'm very sorry you're hurt or suffering, but that doesn't mean my client is to blame.'"

In July 2015, Bonneville briefed and argued three motions to exclude the plaintiffs' expert witnesses in a toxic tort wrongful death case. Her client was the maker of an automotive aerosol solvent; the plaintiffs were mechanics who used the product at work. Such so-called Daubert motions, named for a 1993 U.S. Supreme Court opinion, require judges to act as gatekeepers who prevent unreliable scientific evidence from reaching juries.

Bonneville focused on scientific studies about the effects of the chemical. She showed that the experts relied on studies that supported the plaintiffs' position but omitted many others that did not. "We don't tell the court how to connect the dots. We just present the information that will lead to a conclusion," she said.

Even before the judge ruled, plaintiffs' counsel drastically lowered their settlement



demand and offered to resolve the case quickly and in Bonneville's clients' favor. "The plaintiffs felt the court was impressed by our arguments," she said. "We highlighted that what the experts were saying was not a full or true picture of the science."

In another pair of toxic tort matters, Bonneville was lead defense counsel fielding claims that occupational exposure to organic solvents in flooring-related products produced by her chemical company clients caused plaintiffs' Parkinson's disease.

"We did a lot of fact discovery on our own, then negotiated with the plaintiffs," she said. "We showed that most of the products came

to the market too late to have caused the disease. We got our clients out prior to depositions — a big cost saving, and it happened in part because we reached out before plaintiffs' counsel invested too much in the litigation."

Bonneville has an active pro bono practice. Since 2013, she has worked with the Alliance for Children's Rights aiding prospective parents with the adoption process and representing their interests in court. For the past seven years, she has devoted many hours to the Los Angeles County Bar Association's Domestic Violence Legal Services.

— John Roemer