

Daily Journal

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Top Women Lawyers 2018

*The Daily Journal's Annual List of
Leading Women Lawyers in California*

Laurie J. Edelstein

Part of Edelstein's practice focuses on power, as in electricity and gas generation and transmission companies. "I'm considered to have a good understanding of energy-related litigation and the utility business," she said. Most recently, she has been retained by electric utility Georgia Power Co. in anticipation of lawsuits related to the Dec. 17 power outage at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, a pre-holiday disruption that disabled the world's largest airport and cost Delta Air Lines Inc. an estimated \$25 million to \$50 million.

"That was a major event," she said of the 11-hour outage that led to the cancellation of more than 1,000 flights that affected more than 30,000 passengers. No suits have been filed yet, but Edelstein is leading the utility's investigation into the root cause analysis of the power failure and potential claims of business interruption losses by Delta and others. "I've been commuting to Atlanta a lot," she said.

Edelstein also represents Pacific Gas & Electric Co. and three current and former employees in three related cases pending in the Northern District. Three third-party suppliers of natural gas have sued her client, alleging that PG&E has engaged in improper and anticompetitive activity as the suppliers' billing and collection agent. The activities, the plaintiffs assert, have driven out



competition in the retail gas market, leading to higher consumer prices for natural gas.

The third-party suppliers, including United Energy Trading LLC, Vista Energy Marketing LP and Tiger Natural Gas Inc. included Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act and Sherman Act claims in their complaints, each of which is proceeding separately before different judges. In November, Edelstein and her trial

STEPTOE & JOHNSON LLP
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Practice Type:
Commercial litigation

team brought a successful motion for summary judgment in the lead case, resulting in dismissal of the RICO claims by U.S. District Judge Richard Seeborg of San Francisco. Also in that case, after discovery was completed, United Energy voluntarily dismissed its federal antitrust claim. *United Energy Trading LLC v. PG&E*, 15-cv-2383 (N.D. Cal., filed May 28, 2015).

"It's challenging to have the three cases before three different judges, but the other judges have taken note of these first dismissals," Edelstein said.

She also represents PG&E in the Ghost Ship fire litigation stemming from the tragic Oakland warehouse fire in December 2016. "PG&E was named just a year ago," Edelstein said. Plaintiffs claim her client breached its duties under its tariffs and common law; her defense maintains the company is not responsible for its customers' electrical systems. "In this job, I learn something new every day," she said.

— John Roemer