

# The Job is to Help People

The guiding principle at Makarem & Associates is to care, and right wrongs.

By Kathryn Stelmach Artuso  
Special to the Daily Journal

After founding the Los Angeles law firm Makarem & Associates in 2004, Ron Makarem's initial case involved a future president. He represented Mark Bethea, a writer who sued Donald Trump, NBC, and producer Mark Burnett of "The Apprentice," alleging his idea for a reality television show had been stolen.

Makarem recalls visiting Trump Tower for the deposition, where he encountered a "very relaxed, narcissistic" Trump, he said. "At the time, we didn't really know that much about him other than what we saw on TV, but nothing's changed. He's the exact same person."

gent burden of proof, he noted. Instead, his firm, with a team of 10 attorneys in Brentwood, has turned its focus to legal malpractice, employment law and discrimination, wrongful termination, wage and hour claims and sexual harassment cases.

Regarding legal malpractice cases, Makarem said, "I'm proud of that area of law that we do, and I think it's a really necessary part of our profession. The State Bar just doesn't have the resources, and I think lawyers in general are proud of the work we do, because it keeps our profession with a high integrity level."

One of his biggest cases occurred in 2006, when Makarem represented an ophthalmologist, Dr. Morry Waksberg, ultimately

gal malpractice case that made it to the California Supreme Court, Makarem argued a significant case related to the mediation privilege, in which the judge ruled that mediation discussions between lawyers and clients must remain confidential.

Samuel D. Almon, a partner at the firm, also emphasized the importance of class actions or collective actions on behalf of employees, describing the firm's clients as "individuals who have been discriminated against or wrongfully terminated, sometimes based on pregnancy or race or sex."

"We've had cases against some really big national companies — Tesla, Facebook, Walmart, Starbucks — and we're a small firm," Almon said. "But one of the things that makes me proud of our firm and our culture is that we're not afraid to go up against those big companies, who typically are defended by a national law firm. But by the same token, if we see that there's been a clear wrong committed, we will take cases against smaller companies as well. ... We're motivated by helping these clients, who are not coming from a position of power ... and so it's very gratifying to be able to help them."

Matthew J. Matern, a Manhattan Beach attorney who was co-counsel in the case against Skadden Arps, said he admires the small firm and its leadership.

"I think Ron has assembled a



Ron Makarem and Sam Almon outside their office in Los Angeles.

Justin L. Stewart / Special to the Daily Journal

great team of attorneys," he said, "and he's a great leader in terms of leading by example. ... Ron has always been an excellent litigator. I think he has great instincts for litigating cases and getting his clients excellent recoveries because of his skillful use of litigation to their benefit."

Makarem's leadership is motivated by a "desire to care for people and help people," he said. "When they go through a hardship I care about when they've been wronged, and I want to right it. ... That has motivated me not only to be a good lawyer myself but to inspire the people around me, and the team

has fed off that. I think they've really taken that as our mission, to empower people when they're down. ... If nothing else, what I want to get out there is that it's our job as lawyers and my job as a person just to care about people and help them when they need it most. ... That's our guiding principle."

**'One of the things that makes me proud of our firm and our culture is that we're not afraid to go up against those big companies.'**

— Samuel D. Almon

The case was resolved confidentially, catapulting Makarem's career, though he rarely takes copyright infringement cases anymore. They require a strin-

securing a \$2.6 million settlement in a legal malpractice case against Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP and Affiliates.

In *Cassel v. Superior Court*, a le-

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## ON THE MOVE

### Cornelius & Kasendorf APC.

Alexandre Cornelius and Alexander Kasendorf joined forces to create Calabasas' newest law firm — Cornelius & Kasendorf APC.

The firm specializes in practicing real estate and business law. The two said they represent a wide variety of clients. Cornelius said the firm helps the average individual with any of their litigation or real estate transactional or corporate needs as well as assists companies with transactions in the tens of millions of dollars range.

"I just represented somebody in an \$800,000 dispute as to a condo they were purchasing and our clients and matters run the gamut from something like that to something much more significant," he said. "We've had some good victories, and have helped clients navigate some very large transactions."

Kasendorf was recently re-elected as a board member of the San Fernando Valley Bar Association.

"I've been a member of the board of trustees for the San Fernando Valley Bar Association for a number of years now," Kasendorf said. "I was just inducted for another two years. It's great to serve our community."

Kasendorf was recently a partner at Albert, Barr & Grant.

Their office is at 23801 Calabasas Road, Ste. 100 in Calabasas and their website is [www.thecalaw.com](http://www.thecalaw.com). Attorney Timothy Crawford is joining the firm as a litigation/transactional associate.

### ArentFox Schiff LLP

welcomes Gayland O. Hethcoat II as counsel in Los Angeles from Children's Hospital Los Angeles.

Hethcoat develops solutions for complying with the complex web of federal and state laws governing the healthcare sector, including in the emerging fields of telemedicine and digital health.

### Goodwin Procter LLP

welcomes Bryan Quinn as a partner in Silicon Valley from Davis Polk

Quinn advises clients on capital markets transactions, corporate governance, and mergers and acquisitions. He advises companies and investment banks on initial public offerings, SPAC business combinations, private financings, and other financing transactions by public companies, including equity, debt, and convertible debt offerings.

### Governor Gavin Newsom

appoints Jennifer L. Bollinger chief counsel at the Governor's Office of Emergency Services in Sacramento

Bollinger was assistant chief counsel at the Governor's Office of Emergency Services from 2018 to 2020.

appoints Neil Robertson chief deputy inspector general at the Office of the Inspector General in Sacramento

Robertson has served as acting chief deputy inspector general this year and as senior assistant inspector general since 2019.

appoints David Ndudim to Board of Parole Hearings in Sacramento

Ndudim has served as deputy commissioner and administrative law judge at the Board of Parole Hearings since 2019.

appoints Christopher Calfee special counsel to the secretary at the California Natural Resources Agency in Sacramento

Calfee has been deputy secretary for legal affairs and general counsel at the California Natural Resources Agency since 2017.

appoints Stephanie Shimazu general counsel of the California Natural Resources Agency in Sacramento

Shimazu has been acting assistant chief of the division of law enforcement at the California Department of Justice since 2021 and director of the Bureau of Gambling Control at the California Department of Justice since 2018.

### Murphy, Pearson, Bradley & Feeney P.C.

welcomes I. Hooshie Broomand as senior counsel in Sacramento from Gordon & Ress Scully Mansukhani

Broomand's practice includes general civil litigation with focuses on product defects, professional liability defense, construction, real estate, health care, employment, and high end personal injury claims.

### Ropers Majeski

promotes Cameron M. Miller to senior associate in Los Angeles

Miller counsels clients on all aspects of insurance matters, including those involving allegations of personal injury, wrongful death, insurance defense, and construction defect. He is experienced in trial management, from intake to depositions to motions to trial preparation and settlement negotiation.

### Ropers Majeski

promotes Anna Novruzyan to counsel in Los Angeles

Novruzyan is a business and commercial litigator, handling cases from intake through trial, including setting strategy, trial preparation, and assisting with settlement negotiations. She has extensive experience in commercial contracts and professional liability matters in a variety of industries.

### Ropers Majeski

promotes Mark M. Gnesin to partner in Costa Mesa

Gnesin is a trial lawyer who focuses on personal injury, property damage, and construction defect litigation, including all general li-

ability claims.

### Seltzer Caplan McMahon Vitek

welcomes Michael W Hervey as an associate in San Diego

from Children's Legal Services Hervey represents a wide range of clients, including high-net worth individuals in the areas of estate and gift tax liability, tax planning, trust formation and administration.

### Seltzer Caplan McMahon Vitek

welcomes Jake D. Sesti as an associate in San Diego

from Grant & Kessler Sesti assists clients in a wide range of complex litigation disputes.

### Seltzer Caplan McMahon Vitek

welcomes Allyson N Werner as an associate in San Diego

from Sidley Austin LLP Werner represents individual clients and diverse businesses on a wide range of litigation and appellate matters.

### Seltzer Caplan McMahon Vitek

welcomes Lauren Wood as an associate in San Diego

from PwC Wood's practice focuses on employee benefits and compliance, investment and tax law, international finance and tax planning and controversy.

### Waymaker LLP

announces office relocation The new office is at 515 S. Flower St., Ste. 3500, Los Angeles 90071-4246

### West Coast Trial Lawyers

announces office relocation The new office is at 1147 South Hope Street, Los Angeles 90015

— Douglas Saunders

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