

Stephen LEE

Shareholder

LOS ANGELES

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Stephen is a shareholder, a member of the Firm's Litigation Department, and previously served as the assistant chair for the Litigation Department. He is a highly-experienced appellate attorney, which has translated into consistent success for Stephen and his clients. Stephen has litigated and argued four cases before the Ninth Circuit – all resulting in victories – on complex takings, land use, and constitutional law issues. In addition, Stephen has argued numerous cases in the California Court of Appeal across a broad range of constitutional, land use, CEQA, and takings issues – all resulting in victories. Most recently, Stephen has been admitted to practice before the U.S. Supreme Court and successfully opposed a Petition for Writ of Certiorari.

In addition to providing comprehensive and successful litigation counsel on matters from their inception at trial court through their final adjudication on appeal, Stephen has extensive experience at the administrative level in advising clients on minimizing risks and liabilities and building cases and defenses prior to the commencement of litigation. This work has included briefing and oral argument at administrative hearings and the preparation and revision of resolutions, staff reports, Environmental Impact Reports, Statements of Overriding Consideration, and responses to comment letters.

Stephen is also adept at resolving cases, having successfully briefed and argued in mediation and other settlement proceedings that have resulted in favorable outcomes for Stephen's clients. This has included resolutions in which Stephen has been able to reduce an opposing litigant's claims of over \$4.3 million in damages to only \$400,000 despite a client's clear liability.

PRACTICE AREAS

Coastal
Litigation

FOCUS AREAS

CEQA (California
Environmental Quality Act)
(Litigation)
Constitutional & Civil Rights
Issues
Construction & Public Works
Inverse Condemnation
Land Use Planning & Zoning
(Litigation)
Writs & Appeals

EDUCATION

J.D., Vanderbilt University Law
School
B.A., magna cum laude,
Georgetown University

WORK FOR CLIENTS

Stephen has represented the cities of Agoura Hills, Beverly Hills, Brea, Buena Park, Calimesa, Compton, Hawthorne, Highland, Indio, Manhattan Beach, Newport Beach, Oceanside, Pasadena, Rancho Cucamonga, San Marino, Seal Beach, Temecula, Upland, and Whittier.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Prior to joining Richards, Watson & Gershon, from 2011 to 2013, Stephen clerked for the Honorable Ann I. Jones and thereafter, the Honorable Luis A. Lavin in the Writs and Receivers Department of the Los Angeles Superior Court. Judge Lavin has since been appointed as an Associate Justice to Division 3 of the Court of Appeal, and Judge Jones has sat as a Justice Pro-Tem in Division 3 of the Court of Appeal. As one of only three writ of mandate law clerks in the entire LA County, Stephen assisted in adjudicating hundreds of complex writs of mandate, receivership, and injunctive relief cases filed by and against cities, public entities, administrative agencies, and private parties throughout California.

PROFESSIONAL AND COMMUNITY AFFILIATIONS

Member, Los Angeles County Bar Association

EXPERIENCE

HIGHLIGHTED REPRESENTATIONS (LITIGATION)

- ▶ ***Craneveyor Corp. v. City of Rancho Cucamonga***. Represented the City of Rancho Cucamonga in the United States District Court, the Ninth Circuit, and U.S. Supreme Court proceedings in a complicated takings lawsuit involving over 10 million dollars of private property. Stephen obtained complete litigation and appellate victories at all stages of this lawsuit, winning a dispositive motion to dismiss in the District Court, obtaining a unanimous, unpublished decision in the City's favor from the Ninth Circuit, and successfully opposing appellant's Petition for Writ of Certiorari in the U.S. Supreme Court. This case involved complex facial and regulatory takings issues, including Appellant's unsuccessful attempt to not only establish a taking under *Penn Central* but also Appellant's unsuccessful entreaty to the U.S. Supreme Court to have the landmark *Penn Central* decision overturned and replaced with a new takings analysis.
- ▶ ***Apartment Association of Greater Los Angeles v. City of Beverly Hills***. Represented the City of Beverly Hills in the United States District Court and the Ninth Circuit in a complex constitutional challenge to the City's Rent Stabilization Ordinance. Stephen obtained a complete victory from the district court in a motion to dismiss and successfully defended that decision in the Ninth Circuit, where a three-judge panel issued a unanimous,

unpublished decision in the City's favor. This victory helped protect tenants from no-cause evictions and ensures that landlords comply with the requirements of rent control. This increased the housing stability for residents renting in the City and helped prevent predatory landlord practices, including landlords pursuing no-cause evictions to dramatically increase rents and charging rents in excess of what is allowed under the rent control rules.

- ▶ ***Cheung v. City of Beverly Hills***. Represented City of Beverly Hills in a writ of mandate land use and planning appeal involving the approval and construction of a \$14.5 million-dollar residence. Stephen obtained a complete victory from the trial court and successfully defended that decision in the Court of Appeal, where a three-justice panel issued a unanimous, unpublished decision upholding the trial court victory. The case presented complex challenges to the ministerial and discretionary duties of the City; complex land use issues; issues of statutory interpretation and application; and exhaustion of remedies and preservation of issues on appeal.
- ▶ ***Coalition for Preservation of the Arroyo v. City of Pasadena***. Represented City of Pasadena in a CEQA appeal involving complex environmental challenges to the use of the Rose Bowl for over a dozen, additional entertainment and sporting events, including potentially hosting an NFL team. Stephen and the litigation team at RWG obtained a complete victory in the trial court and successfully defended that decision in the Court of Appeal, which issued a unanimous, unpublished decision in the City of Pasadena's favor. The case involved complex CEQA issues, including the sufficiency of the Statement of Overriding Considerations, the sufficiency of the Environmental Impact Report, the timing of environmental review, and the defense of project description and pre-commitment challenges.

NEWS

California Supreme Court Grants Review of Landmark Voting Rights Decision

11.23.2020

Challengers to At-Large Elections Must Prove Effect on Election Outcomes

07.16.2020