

Daily Journal

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Top 75 Labor & Employment Attorneys

California will see important developments in employment law soon, as the state Supreme Court considers three cases that will impact class action waivers and arbitration agreements. Our state's labor and employment lawyers have always led the nation in the development of the issues of the day and the creation of law, and they're some of the most experienced practitioners in the country. To pick the Daily Journal's annual list of top 75 employment litigators, public labor negotiators and corporate and regulatory specialists in California, we reviewed hundreds of nominations from law firms, alternative dispute resolution providers and nonprofits. We sought to recognize work that is having a broad impact on the legal community, the nation and society.

— The Editors

LABOR & EMPLOYMENT



Nate Kowalski

Atkinson Andelson Loya Ruud & Romo APLC
Cerritos

Specialty: public- and private-sector litigation defense

Diego and other superior courts from allegations stemming from these decisions, said he prides himself on delivering bang for the buck.

"I think of it as being an architect," he said. "You draw up the plans and then you meet with your constituent bodies," he said. "That approach leads to a cost-effective handling of litigation."

And if an attorney is going to know where to start building and where to devote resources, one has got to conceive of a final construction.

"If you don't know where you're going in a case, you end up being very reactive. That tends to be very costly — you end up spending a lot of time in discovery disputes because you don't know what the legal theories are going to be."

Kowalski was lead counsel for San Diego County Superior Court in its dispute against the San Diego County Court Employees Association, which took issue with the court's system of executing

layoffs. The court employees maintained that the court should have laid off employees based on seniority with the court, not seniority within various job titles. An appeals court judge determined that the court acted logically and legally, though the union has appealed that decision.

"It's a significant issue for these courts that are faced with these extremely gut wrenching decisions about whether to lay off and how to lay off," he said.

Kowalski also recently obtained a victory for one of his clients, Ralphs grocery stores, by ensuring that a disability discrimination claim be adjudicated in arbitration, rather than the trial court in which it was initially filed. In the proceedings, a retired judge sided with the grocer, finding no evidence of discrimination.

"As a defendant you feel that the focus is going to be on the merits of the dispute and the legal issues, rather than the emotion that can play such a big part in a jury trial," he said."

— Chase Scheinbaum

It follows that superior courts that have been forced by dwindling funds to lay-off critical employees would want to spend wisely on outside counsel. Kowalski, who has stepped up to defend San