

# Daily Journal

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## Top Boutiques IN CALIFORNIA 2019

### PUBLIC LAW

## Renne Public Law Group LLP

### SAN FRANCISCO

**R**enne Public Law Group, founded by former San Francisco City Attorney Louise H. Renne, represents government entities and other clients in major cases with ambitious goals, such as remediating the opioid epidemic, reforming public pension law and curbing sexual harassment at tech giant Alphabet Inc.

“My biggest matter at the moment is the big opioid cases in Ohio,” said Renne, who assembled the firm with founding partners Jonathan V. Holtzman, the former chief labor negotiator for former San Francisco Mayor Willie L. Brown Jr.; former San Francisco Deputy City Attorney Arthur A. Hartinger; and former San Francisco Deputy City Attorney Teresa L. Stricker. The firm currently has 21 lawyers.

In September 2019, the federal judge overseeing the massive multi-district litigation seeking to recover money damages for tens of thousands of local governments from opiate manufacturers, distributors and others to combat the opioid crisis appointed Renne as one of six special counsel to represent a plaintiff negotiation class that will strive to achieve a global settlement. “This hasn’t been tried before,” said Renne. The negotiation class comprises every local government in the U.S., minus those that

opt-out. “If 75 percent agree to join the negotiation class, we’ll be in business.” Her firm separately represents seven counties and two cities in the case. *In re: National Prescription Opiate Litigation*, 1-17-MD-2804 (N.D. Ohio, consolidated Dec. 12, 2017).

A settlement, Renne said, “could help alleviate some of the harm the opioid crisis has inflicted on communities across our country. I’m honored to serve as counsel in a case that exemplifies our core mission: practicing public law in the public interest.”

Renne brings to the effort her experience as city attorney in achieving the \$206 billion Master Tobacco Settlement in 1998. The deal she helped forge for San Francisco insured that the proceeds went to health-related projects. With opioids, she said, “the ramifications are very large in terms of the homeless on the streets and the ruined lives.”

In the pension reform endeavor, the firm represents government entities seeking to modify pension payouts, a thorny issue that has long plagued public budgets. Teed up, fully briefed and awaiting an oral argument date at the state Supreme Court is a case testing the constitutionality of the 2013 Public Employees’ Pension Reform Act. *Alameda County Deputy Sheriff’s Association v. Alameda County Employees’ Retirement Association*, S247095 (Ca. S. Ct., petition for review filed Feb. 16, 2018).

Renne’s firm represents the real party in interest, Central Contra Costa Sanitary District. “This case was granted at the urging of then-Governor [Jerry] Brown to address how pensions can be changed,” Holtzman



Jana Ašenbrennerová/Daily Journal

Clockwise from left: Teresa Stricker, Arthur Hartinger, Jonathan Holtzman and Louise Renne of Renne Public Law Group

said. “We are optimistic that the court will provide some more flexibility to cities and counties without changing core elements for current employees.”

Set to argue before the high court is firm of counsel Linda M. Ross, a former general counsel to then-San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom. Earlier, she and Holtzman authored an influential amicus brief in a previous pension reform matter that the state Supreme Court saw their way in March 2019. The justices agreed that a rule that let government workers buy additional retirement service credits is not constitutionally protected. *Cal Fire Local 2881 v. California Public Employees’ Retirement System*, S239958

(Cal. S. Ct., filed Feb. 8, 2017).

In Renne’s case targeting Alphabet, shareholders claim its board of directors approved substantial payouts to former executives to keep quiet allegations of sexual harassment, causing financial and reputational damage to it and Google Inc. “Harassing executives were let go with hundreds of millions of dollars in their pockets, and we think that’s wrong.” The matter is stalled while the defense gets new counsel up to speed, she said. “We are standing with the workers,” she added. *Martin v. Page*, 19CV343672 (S. Mateo Super. Ct., filed Jan. 10, 2019).

— John Roemer

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