



James M. Morris Of Counsel

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Practice Areas

Complex Business Litigation | Food & Agriculture | Food & Agriculture
Litigation

Jim Morris represents an array of private sector clients in all areas of California agribusiness—from manufacturers to farmers—blending his vast knowledge of the industry with exceptional trial skills.

Jim has spent his entire legal career successfully working with agricultural and business clients in litigation and transaction matters alike. His vigorous representation of both plaintiffs and defendants has involved many sectors of agriculture and the business world, including representation of individuals, small companies, large companies, and international enterprises. He also possesses extensive expertise in the area of negotiating and drafting, and has advised numerous companies in regard to corporate governance. Jim's effectiveness is recognized by his peers, as he is often called upon to mediate and arbitrate business and agricultural disputes.

In addition to his legal work, Jim has devoted a significant amount of time to community, political, and nonprofit activities, often in a leadership role. Jim incorporated the Children's Museum of Stockton and was an original member of its Board of Directors. He has long been involved in the Stockton Symphony Association as a board member, Vice President for Fund Development, and President. Recognizing that the welfare of the entire Central Valley can be affected by the outcomes of certain legal cases, he is a passionate advocate for his clients and an equally ardent supporter of his community.

Experience

- Obtained a judgment in excess of \$450,000 against an almond growing company that failed to pay for its irrigation system and claimed damages for the death of its almond orchard.
- Successfully defended aerial applicators throughout the Central Valley against claims of negligence and strict liability relating to the application of agricultural chemicals.
- Obtained a jury verdict of \$1,217,000, of which \$1 million was punitive damages, plus costs and attorneys' fees in an action for breach of contract, conversion, and fraudulent transfer of assets.

- Tried and received a breach of contract judgment for more than \$800,000 in a case involving the sale of corporate stock.
- Represented one of three plaintiffs who obtained a multimillion-dollar jury verdict arising from damage to more than 100 aircraft as the result of contaminated aviation fuel.
- Successfully represented a buyer of a walnut orchard in a fraud action against the seller who concealed the existence of disease in the orchard.
- Obtained a judgment in plaintiff's favor in *Burroughs v. Board of Trustees of Pension Trust Fund for Operating Engineers*, 398 F.Supp. 168, which was affirmed by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, and which the United States Supreme Court refused to review. The issue was whether the Pension Trust Fund could deny an operating engineer a disability pension. The plaintiff had become disabled after working in the heavy equipment industry all his adult life. He was denied a disability pension because of the break in service rules contained in the collective bargaining agreement negotiated between the Operating Engineers Union and the Association of General Contractors. Jim successfully argued that definition of disability employed by the Pension Trust Fund was arbitrary and capricious and thus violated federal law. Trial judge William Orrick found in plaintiff's favor. The case established new law.

Professional & Community Service

- Stockton Symphony Association, Board of Directors 2012-present; VP Development 2016-2018; Co-President 2016-2018; President 2019/2020; Past President 2020
- San Joaquin County Bar Association; Board of Governors, 2015-2017; President, 2016
- California Lawyers Association, Litigation Section
- Children's Home of Stockton, Board of Directors, 2005-2014; VP Finance, 2013-2014
- Children's Museum of Stockton, Founding Board Member and Counsel
- Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, Volunteer Advocate
- Foundation Fund of Temple Israel, President; Board of Directors
- Temple Israel of Stockton, President; Board of Directors

Education

- J.D., Santa Clara University School of Law, 1970
- B.A., University of California at Davis, 1967

Honors & Rankings

- Martindale-Hubbell® Rated AV Preeminent® for Thirty Years, 1989-2019
- American Board of Trial Advocates, 2016-present