

# Daily Journal

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# TOP BOUTIQUES IN CALIFORNIA 2022

## MURPHY ROSEN LLP

SANTA MONICA  
COMPLEX BUSINESS  
LITIGATION

**P**aul D. Murphy and David E. Rosen got to know each other at USC Gould School of Law and stayed in touch over the next decade before founding Murphy Rosen LLP in 2003. “We started here when our previous firms merged into Jones Day,” Rosen said. “We didn’t want to go back into big firm life.”

The partners, now including Edward A. Klein and Daniel N. Csillag, focus on complex business litigation with an emphasis on taking cases to trial. “In a boutique, there are more busy tasks, but there’s also a huge increase in my ability to control my eclectic practice.”

In early October, client Angelina Jolie was atop the docket as Murphy and Csillag filed a blockbuster cross-complaint alleging that ex-husband Brad Pitt was abusive to Jolie and their six children on a harrowing private plane trip from France to California in 2016. The episode led to their divorce.

The divorce, in turn, led to a legal battle over a French winery the couple once owned together. In 2021, after Pitt rejected Jolie’s offers to sell her shares of the winery to him, she sold



BACK ROW: PAUL D. MURPHY AND DAVID E. ROSEN; FRONT ROW: EDWARD A. KLEIN AND DANIEL N. CSILLAG

her interest to a business partner with extensive experience in the alcohol industry, including access to a worldwide distribution network. The ongoing litigation involves Pitt’s breach of contract claim that Jolie’s sale violated unwritten rights he had. *Pitt et al. v. Jolie et al.*, 22STCV0608 (L.A. Super. Ct., filed Feb. 17, 2022).

The case involves complicated legal and factual issues, including the interplay between California and Luxembourg law. “When you put the white hat on, it’s more enjoyable,” Murphy said. “She’s in the right here. We tried to make clear the compelling nature of her story in a straightforward fashion, passionate but not flowery.”

After detailing how Pitt allegedly choked one of the children, struck another in the face and grabbed Jolie by the head and shook her, the cross-complaint explains that Jolie tried to shield her children from reliving those events. It adds, “But when Pitt filed this lawsuit seeking to reassert control over Jolie’s financial life and compel her to rejoin her ex-husband as a frozen-out business partner, Pitt forced Jolie to publicly defend herself on these issues for the first time.”

Murphy and Rosen, meanwhile, are at the helm of a pair of significant legal malpractice cases. Trial is set for Nov. 7 for client June De Line on her claim that a Katten Muchin LLP partner,

Carol A. Johnston, mishandled her estate plan and tried to coerce her into participating in a cover-up. The law firm has denied the allegations. *De Line et al. v. Katten Muchin LLP et al.*, BC710138 (L.A. Super. Ct., filed June 13, 2018).

"I also feel we have the white hat here," Murphy said. "I don't enjoy suing lawyers, but we feel very comfortable in this circumstance."

And the firm represents former Dentons US LLP partner Jinshu "John" Zhang, who sued his firm after he was fired — allegedly for reporting

misconduct by Dentons' chairman. A critical legal issue in the case concerns California's Labor Code, New York State arbitration rules and whether equity partners at large law firms are actually employees under California law. *Zhang v. Dentons US LLP*, 21STCV19442 (L.A. Super. Ct., filed May 24, 2021).

"Sometimes firms make mistakes and refuse to make it right," Rosen said.

Murphy is proud of a recent win for client Catholic Medical Mission Board, a large charity, in litigation by the California attorney general over allegations of

accounting and solicitation improprieties. *CMMB v. The Attorney General of the State of California*, 20STCP01520 (L.A. Super. Ct., filed April 28, 2020).

The firm not only scored a defense victory but was awarded more than \$375,000 in fees — unusual in a case against the attorney general — and praise from the court for having presented the case "with extraordinary skill."

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— JOHN ROEMER