



OCBA ELECTION 2024 OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS

PRESIDENT-ELECT

Mei Tsang



Mei Tsang is an intellectual property partner at Umberg Zipser LLP, and honored to be endorsed by many OCBA Past Presidents and other leaders. Mei is completing her term as OCBA Treasurer and she has already completed two terms as an elected OCBA Board member, and has held many other leadership positions within the OCBA over the past 15 years. Among other things, she chaired the IP & Technology Section, has been a member of the OCBA Charitable Fund Board for the past nine years, including co-chairing the Raise Your Glass event, and currently is the co-chair of OCBA's Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee. Mei regularly contributes articles to the OC Lawyer magazine and has developed and participated in numerous OCBA webinars. She also is a member of OCBA's Racial Justice, COVID-19, and Intergenerational Task Forces, the Mentoring, Editorial Advisory, and Lawyer Well Being Committees, and Mommy Esq. Committee.

Mei is known for her positive, can-do, attitude. She never turns down an opportunity to help and serve. In addition to her involvement with the OCBA, Mei is the Immediate Past President for Community Legal Aid of SoCal. Mei also is a proud member of Orange County Women Lawyers Association, Orange County Asian American Bar Association, Hispanic Bar Association, Thurgood Marshall Bar Association, OCKABA, Lavender Bar, and ABTL, and volunteers for the Constitutional Rights Foundation.

Our profession is facing very challenging times. All the traditional rules seem to be up in the air, ranging from how we work, who we are (in the face of State Bar changes), to our generational differences, and even to how we connect with each other. The OCBA has been tackling these challenges head on. Mei is proud to be part of those efforts and looks forward to continuing to contribute to them.

As a Chinese immigrant who came to this country at a young age, Mei had to learn how to adapt and evolve. Mei is prepared to lead the OCBA to adapt and evolve as well.

Mei thanks you for your support and wants to hear from you how the OCBA can better serve you.

TREASURER

Shirin Forootan



Shirin Forootan is the founding and managing attorney at Forootan Law, where she practices employment litigation on both sides, provides advice and counsel, conducts workplace investigations, and provides expert testimony. She is currently on the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors for the OCBA and on the Board for Orange County Women Lawyers.

Shirin has a rich history of volunteering for this legal community, including serving as Chair of the Community Outreach Committee, Chair of the Mommy Esquire Committee, Chair of the Lawyer Well Being Committee, Chair of the Labor & Employment Section, and Chair of the Judiciary Committee. She has also served as an active member of the Administration of Justice Committee, Nominating Committee, Appointments Committee, and Legislative Resolutions Committee. Shirin is also a long-standing and active member of Orange County United Way.

She has significant leadership and business experience such that she will serve OCBA well as Treasurer.

Shirin is native to Orange County—she grew up in Irvine and practiced at small, medium, and large firms in Orange County. She lives in Newport Beach with her husband and fifth-grade son.

Please vote for Shirin for 2024 OCBA Treasurer so that she can continue her long-standing commitment to carrying out the mission of our bar.

SECRETARY (Elect 1)

Sharon Oh-Kubisch



I am humbled and honored to be a nominee for the 2024 OCBA Secretary position. It has been a privilege for me to serve on the OCBA Board of Directors, and I look forward to finding more ways to better serve you.

A Little About Me:

I was born and raised here in Orange County, California. I have been practicing law for over 25 years, primarily focusing on business and real estate law. I am grateful to be affiliated with Smiley Wang-Ekval, LLP, a firm with a rich history of community service, leadership and participation. I have been involved with the OCBA for over 20 years.

I have had the pleasure of serving as the former Chair of the OCBA Business Litigation Section and as a member of the Administration of Justice committee. I currently serve as Chair of the OCBA Real Estate Law Section, a Board member of the OCBA Charitable Fund, and a Board member of OCAABA. I also currently serve on a variety of OCBA committees, including the Finance, Practice Pointers Portal, and Mommy Esq. committees. I know firsthand how much the OCBA can give us in terms of community, friendships, meaningful education, and opportunities to expand our horizons.

During the pandemic, the OCBA pushed out many webinars focusing on deeper discussions about unity. I personally rolled up my sleeves to assess the legal needs, made recommendations to address those needs, delivered updates as quickly as possible, worked to maximize resources, and promoted collaboration across the legal system. There is still much to do.

Why Am I Running?

If elected as Secretary, my goal is to help our Bench and Bar find better resolutions on the myriad of issues that face our profession post-COVID. I want the Bar to expand to be more of a service to our legal community, to provide greater access with better technology, and to have more voices heard. Finally, I want to continue OCBA's mantra for civility and professionalism. I look forward to hearing from you on how we can do better. Thank you for your continued trust, confidence, and support.

Eric V. Traut



Our Bar Association remains among the strongest in the nation. I am running for OCBA Secretary because I believe that together we must continue to take the lead at meeting the changing needs of our profession.

I am a partner at Traut Firm – where I work alongside my wife, brother, and son – handling personal injury and wrongful death litigation. Born and raised in Fullerton, a graduate of both Cal State Fullerton and Western State University College of Law, I have devoted over three decades of demonstrated leadership to our Orange County legal community, prioritizing service to others.

I am humbled by the confidence placed in my ability to lead, having served as President of the OC Trial Lawyers Association, our local chapter of ABOTA, OC Italian American Lawyers Association (twice), Banyard Inn of Court, and the OC Bar Foundation's Project Youth.

Through Project Youth, I continue to donate time and money to educate and mentor at-risk teens. Further, I am a proud founding member of the OC Trial Lawyer Charities, even offering myself up earlier this year as a roasteer at one of its major fundraisers.

My lengthy track record implementing the OCBA's mission includes service on its Board of Directors, Judiciary Committee, Co-Chair for the College of Trial Advocacy for nearly 25 years, and Board Member of both the Masters Division and Charitable Fund.

I remain committed to the OCBA membership. As its Secretary, I will focus support for our changing needs in this post-pandemic environment. We owe it to our profession to prioritize the mental health and well-being of our members.

My vision for the OCBA is to promote public confidence in our legal system. We must prioritize the depth of diverse representation, maintain civility, and provide engaging educational programming. Together, our work will ensure the lasting success of our legal community, local judiciary, and the public we serve.

If you would like to speak with me before casting your ballot, please contact me via my personal cell phone at (714) 624-9005 or visit www.EricTraut4OCBA.com.

I hope to earn your vote.

DIRECTORS – AT – LARGE (Elect 4)

Christopher J. Ayala



Christopher J. Ayala established Ayala Law Group, APC in downtown Santa Ana in 2012. He graduated with Honors obtaining his bachelor's degree in Business Administration Management and a minor in Philosophy from California State University, Fullerton.

He is an alumnus from Whittier Law School where he received his Juris Doctor degree, graduating Magna Cum Laude. Mr. Ayala was immersed in his law school experience being involved in Law Review and Trial Advocacy Honors Board. His dedication was rewarded when he received two CALI Awards for Legal Writing and Professional Skills.

Upon graduation, Mr. Ayala was admitted to the California State Bar in December 2011. His passion for the law and his community led him to establish his law firm where his practice focuses on criminal and immigration law.

Mr. Ayala is committed to providing his clients with legal representation based on integrity, compassion, and experience. He goes above and beyond to meet his clients' goals and objectives in order to zealously represent every single client. More than 90% of his clientele are Hispanic and monolingual Spanish speakers, and he has the natural ability to connect with them and understand their unique circumstances in their own language and culture.

He is the proud son of immigrant parents who paved the way for his future and success as an attorney. His parents instilled in him the fire to make a future in a new country and reach for the American Dream.

Justin W. Fong



I am honored to be nominated to run for OCBA Director at Large.

I am the General Counsel of AmWest Funding Corp., a retail mortgage banker, securitizer, and one of the nation's largest Non-QM lenders. I have assisted AmWest with over \$2 billion in loan securitizations, \$10 billion in loan sales, and \$100 million in corporate funding.

Outside of my work, I am actively involved in our community. From working on the Costa Mesa Housing and Public Grant Committee to presently serving as a Commissioner for the Orange County Public Financing Advisory Committee, I am strongly committed to public service and to the betterment of Orange County. Currently, I also serve as Secretary for the OCBA Banking and Lending Section, Secretary for OC Asian American Bar Association, and a Board of Director for Association of Corporate Counsel.

As an active OCBA member, I have truly enjoyed the organization and have been humbled by my nomination. If elected, my focus would be to bolster the membership experience through a two-pronged approach of increasing both the value and the enjoyment of an OCBA membership.

As the preeminent bar organization in Orange County, OCBA's greatest value comes from its members and the network of the community itself. Through my involvement with the in-house and affiliate bars organizations, I am confident that there is not only the room, but also the desire for interconnection among the organizations. My goal as a Board Director would be to build bridges and networks across these organizations to allow OCBA members to grow their practices through diverse contacts, novel referrals, and new partners.

Additionally, I understand that while we are unified in our profession as attorneys, our identities stretch beyond the courtroom. We are outdoor enthusiasts, pet aficionados, devoted parents, and more. As we seek meaningful engagement from our membership, we also appreciate moments of levity and connection. This perspective inspired me to organize various events, from family outings at Tanaka Farms to dynamic CLE Doubleheaders with BallastPoint, which I aim to further if elected to the Board of Directors.

Thank you for your consideration.

Eemaan Jalili



My name is Eemaan Jalili, and I am running to serve on the OCBA Board of Directors.

With a diverse legal career that began in 2012, I'm eager to bring my insights and experiences to the OCBA Board. My leadership within various associations, collaboration across Orange County, and ongoing commitment to practical solutions define my approach to the law.

Since my time with the Young Lawyers Division, I've had the opportunity to serve OCBA in various capacities. From organizing anti-hate seminars during the pandemic to chairing the Summer Social and DEI Gala since 2018, my focus has consistently been on fostering community and empathy. Additionally, my work with affiliate bars, including my current role as the National Secretary of the Iranian American Bar Association, has expanded my understanding of our diverse legal landscape.

As someone who's organized community-focused events and currently chairs the DEI Committee of OCBA, I understand the needs and values that are core to our profession. I've learned that embracing change and respecting tradition are not mutually exclusive but essential in serving our community effectively.

My vision for OCBA is one of unity and progress. By focusing on enhancing legal practice through sensible integration of technology and fostering cooperation between diverse communities, I seek to build bridges, not divide. I believe in a practical, balanced approach that makes legal services more accessible without losing the integrity of our professional heritage.

What drives me is not merely embracing buzzwords but working diligently to make a tangible difference. My unique background, informed by global experiences and professional qualifications, equips me to bring fresh perspectives and real solutions to OCBA.

I'm not running for the OCBA Board to make a statement but to serve, improve, and sustain the legal community in Orange County. Together, we can shape an OCBA that is responsive, inclusive, and grounded in the principles that have long guided us.

I seek your support to make this shared vision a reality.

Casey R. Johnson



I am honored to be nominated to serve on the Board of Directors of the Orange County Bar Association. I have spent my entire career as an attorney at the law firm of Aitken*Aitken*Cohn and have been a proud member of the OCBA since my first year of practice.

Giving back to the legal community and the community at large has always been an important part of fulfilling what I see are the obligations we have as members of the legal profession. I have served on the Board of OCBA for the past two years, during which time I have served on a number of committees. I have been published numerous times in OCBA's *Orange County Lawyer* magazine and have presented at numerous OCBA and OCBA-affiliate MCLE events. If re-elected to the Board of Directors of the OCBA, I will continue to support a return to in-person events to help foster and reinforce the importance of civility in the legal profession, and make sure the OCBA continues the outstanding work of its committees and sections across all practice areas.

Outside of the OCBA, I have served in leadership roles throughout my legal career. I am the past president of the Orange County Trial Lawyers Association (OCTLA), past president of the Orange County Lavender Bar Association (OCLBA), and the past president of the Robert A. Banyard Inn of Court. I also serve on the boards of directors of the Public Law Center and Operation Helping Hands, and as an appointee of the governor on the Orange County Judicial Selection Advisory Committee. Outside of Orange County, I am the immediate past president of the Western Trial Lawyers Association (WTLA) and currently serve on the Executive Committee and as Third Vice President of the Consumer Attorneys of California (CAOC), as well as on the Board of Governors of the American Association for Justice (AAJ).

I live in San Clemente with my husband, our Australian Shepherd (Hazel), our rescue cat (Ewa), and our desert tortoise (Tammy). I would be honored to have your vote.

William C. O'Neill



Service to the legal community runs deep in my family. I am a fourth-generation attorney: my paternal great grandfather (Columbia Law, practice in Maui); my grandmother Elizabeth Murphy O'Neill (began Boalt Hall in 1940 as one of only 3 women in her class, established the first Family Law Court of Conciliation in the Alameda County Superior Court); and my dad (UC Hastings, state and federal Judge). I earned my undergraduate degree at Stanford University and then graduated from the UC Hastings School of Law in 2007, serving as the President of our graduating class.

My family's legal legacy serves as a constant inspiration to me to learn from and serve alongside leaders in our community. It is also the impetus to serve the community whenever and wherever I can help.

This year, I am the President of the Association of Business Trial Lawyers (Orange County Chapter), where we have surpassed all past membership records. Our programming attendance is busting at the seams.

I remain a Trustee of the Celtic Bar Association and also previously served as President of the University of California Hastings College of Law Board of Governors in 2016.

I have special gratitude for my law partners at Ross, Wolcott, Teinert & Prout, LLP for their encouragement to serve the Orange County legal community. Thank you also to my prior mentors at Haynes & Boone, LLP who always encouraged this path of giving back.

Thank you for **YOUR** support and vote to serve you as a member of the Orange County Bar Association Board of Directors.

To learn more, please visit my website at <https://www.rossllp.com/Attorney-Will-O'Neill.html>. Or contact me at wco@rossllp.com.

Please vote for Will O'Neill for OCBA Board of Directors.

Honieh O. Udenka



As a member of the OCBA Board of Directors, I would bring a unique perspective and diverse experience to the table. I am in Brown Rudnick LLP's Litigation & Arbitration Practice Group, and have lived, studied, and practiced in Orange County for the past decade. I have worked with a wide range of clients, from individuals and small businesses to large corporations, and have gained valuable insights in the process. In addition to my legal practice, I am committed to serving the Orange County legal community and to that end, I am the current President of the Thurgood Marshall Bar Association. I also serve as a board member of Community Legal Aid of Southern California. I believe that a diverse and inclusive legal community enhances the overall quality of legal representation and the administration of justice.

If elected to the OCBA Board of Directors, I would work tirelessly to further these goals. I would zealously advocate in OCBA's mission "To Enhance the System of Justice, To Support the Lawyers Who Serve It, and To Assist the Community Served By It."

I am truly honored to be nominated for this position and I am excited about the possibility of serving on the OCBA Board of Directors. I believe that my dedication, experience, and passion would make me an asset to the board and to the Orange County legal community as a whole. Thank you for considering my candidacy.

Andrew A. Wood



I am honored to have been nominated to run for the OCBA Board of Directors and would be grateful to serve. I am a real estate litigation partner of Allen Matkins Leck Gamble Mallory & Natsis LLP. For the past nearly 12 years, I have practiced business and real estate litigation at small, large, and mid-size firms throughout Orange County, where I am also privileged to have grown up. During that time, I've had the opportunity to be mentored by and follow the example of many of our local bar leaders. I have enjoyed becoming a part of the OCBA community, from leading the Celtic Bar Association to serving on the Education Committee, to participating in countless section meetings. If elected to serve on the Board of Directors, I look forward to helping continue to further the spirit of community, civility, and professionalism the OCBA seeks to foster among all of its attorneys, including by providing first-class continuing education and mentoring the next generation of Orange County attorneys.

Nicole Whyte



Nicole Whyte is a Founding Partner of Bremer Whyte Brown & O'Meara, LLP, a full-service law firm with 9 offices in 5 states. Nicole has been a committed member of OCBA since 1992. She is a nationally recognized litigator with over 35 years of trial experience, and 26 years of experience leading and managing her law firm, which has grown from 4 attorneys in 1997 to over 200 today. A successful and sought-after trial attorney, Nicole has litigated hundreds of complex, multi-million-dollar lawsuits during her career. She has an AV rating in Martindale-Hubbell, and for the past 12 years has been consistently included in the California Super Lawyer lists of top lawyers in Orange County and Southern California. Nicole has also been recognized by Best Lawyers in America for her work in family law. Throughout her career, Nicole has always placed great importance on civility and professionalism. In 2012, she was the proud recipient of the Robert Banyard Inn of Court Angelo Palmieri Award for excellence in civility and professionalism.

Nicole has been steadfastly committed to supporting and serving her legal community her entire career. For over two decades, she has served on various OCBA legal committees and boards. Nicole currently serves on the board of OCBA Master's Division and is the 2023 board president of PLC, the largest pro-bono law firm headquartered in Orange County. She is also a current board member of the Sonenshine Pro Bono Committee. Nicole is a founding fellow of the OC Bar Foundation and served as secretary for the Robert Banyard Inn of Court for eight years. In her law practice, she collaborates with her firm's diversity and inclusion committee to discern and implement best practices for ensuring a diverse and inclusive workplace, with the goal of providing unparalleled legal services.

If elected as an OCBA director, Nicole will call upon her experience serving on various boards, and her many years of law practice and management experience, to help identify and support the needs of the OCBA and its thriving and diverse OC legal community.

Lesley D. Young



Having worked and lived in Orange County for nearly all of my legal career, I am seeking to serve as a Director at Large for OCBA to give back to the legal community that has supported me.

After a brief stint practicing business litigation with a civil law firm, I joined the Orange County District Attorney's Office in 1997 where I rose through the ranks and cultivated the next generation of prosecutors. I am currently the Assistant District Attorney in charge of the Major Fraud and Consumer & Environmental Protection Units, leading a team of 34. Other assignments have included the Sexual Assault Unit, Felony Panel, Felony Charging, and several misdemeanor posts.

I have completed 71 jury trials, including 30 felonies. I successfully argued a case at the 4th District Court of Appeal in Santa Ana. In 2016, I was awarded Outstanding Prosecutor for the Sexual Assault Unit. I have also volunteered as a Court Appointed Special Advocate for a child in foster care, taught 5th grade students about the ills of gangs and drugs through the volunteer GRIP program, and prosecuted child sexual abuse cases for 3 years.

I earned my Bachelor's and Juris Doctor degrees at USC, where I met my husband, who is an attorney for a private company. In addition to being a busy lawyer and active OCBA member, I am a proud mom of 4 (including 16-year-old triplets) and have served in supporting roles for high school band and PTO. My love for kids and my work to protect vulnerable children will continue to guide me. There is much work to be done to reach Orange County's vulnerable youth and help them thrive and live their best lives.

I would be grateful to have your vote for Director at Large.