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TOP 40 UNDER 40 LAWYERS



2025



COLIN H. ROLFS

MILLER BARONDESS, LLP

LOS ANGELES

Colin Rolfs has built his practice around complex commercial disputes, securing favorable outcomes for clients in matters involving breach of contract, employment, entertainment, real estate, finance and government entities.

Rolfs has been practicing law in Los Angeles since 2011. His approach centers on clarity and preparation, principles he credits to his colleagues at Miller Barondess.

"I try to learn from everyone — colleagues, opposing counsel, clients and judges," Rolfs said. "But I especially credit my col-

leagues at Miller Barondess with teaching me to approach every case with trial in mind from day one."

That forward-thinking strategy has yielded results in high-stakes litigation. In July 2025, the California Supreme Court ruled in favor of Rolfs' clients on whether elected officials can bring whistleblower retaliation claims under Labor Code section 1102.5. *Brown v. City of Inglewood*, S280773 (Cal., filed Aug. 1, 2023).

The plaintiff was the elected treasurer of the city of Inglewood, and Rolfs represented the mayor, councilmembers and the city itself.

The court agreed that elected officials are not employees under the statute, clarifying that political disputes cannot be reframed as employment retaliation claims. The decision represents a significant win for public entities statewide.

"The case was a great opportunity to really dig into the law," Rolfs said. "We left no stone unturned, examining legislative history going all the way back to 1913."

Rolfs has also handled entertainment litigation with commercial implications. He represented the founder and principal member of Journey in litigation over rights to the band's name. When his client secured those rights, the band was able to continue touring.

In government defense work, Rolfs represented the county of Los Angeles in

a case involving allegations of deputy subgroups within the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. Plaintiffs, who were sheriff deputies, claimed harassment and assault by members of the Banditos subgroup at the East L.A. Station. The parties reached a favorable settlement days before trial. *Hernandez, et al. v. County of Los Angeles, et al.*, 19STCV-33158 (L.A. Super., filed Sept. 18, 2019).

"It can be tricky to handle cases in court that are also drawing media or political attention," Rolfs said. "While lawsuits are ultimately decided by juries, not in the court of public opinion, you can't fully serve your client's interests without carefully considering how the litigation and your positions within it intersect with the public sphere."

Rolfs' defense strategy extends beyond liability questions. Last year, he defended a hospital in a six-week bench trial over a commercial landlord-tenant dispute. The court found for the plaintiff, but awarded only \$5,000 in nominal damages, below the claimed amount and the pre-trial statutory settlement offer. His client secured a net recovery of costs.

Rolfs acknowledges technology's role in legal practice but emphasizes direct human engagement.

"Ultimately, neither Westlaw nor AI are going to testify for you or argue your case in court," he said.