

Daily Journal

SEPTEMBER 25, 2024

TOP

40

UNDER FORTY 2024



Miller Barondess
LOS ANGELES • AGE 37

Casey B. Sypek

Casey Sypek joined Miller Barondess 10 years ago because she really wanted to be a trial lawyer. But not just any trial lawyer. She wanted “to handle high stakes, intense, challenging, creative litigation and to start doing it right away,” she said. “I came over here as a very junior associate and I loved it right away. It was clearly for me.”

Her most recent trial was perhaps the most heavily publicized civil trial of 2022. She helped defend Los Angeles County against the lawsuit Kobe Bryant’s widow brought over

photos deputy sheriffs and firefighters took of the helicopter crash that took the life of the basketball great, his daughter and others. *Bryant v. County of Los Angeles*, 2:20-cv-09582 (C.D. Cal., filed Oct. 19, 2020).

“I handled some of the more nuanced witnesses where there was a lot of emotion involved,” Sypek said. “It was obviously a really challenging case.” The jury awarded \$15 million each to Vanessa Bryant and the other plaintiff although they had asked for \$75 million.

Her next trial is likely to be in July 2025 when she will be the lead counsel representing the county suing the alleged perpetrators of a bribery and kickback scheme that cost the county tens of millions of dollars over many years. The lawsuit alleges that the owner of a telecommunications contractor paid two county officials to award contracts to them and OK orders for work not done. All three have pleaded guilty to criminal charges related to the scheme. *County of Los Angeles v. Nexus IS Inc.*, 23STCV03118 (L.A. Super. Ct., filed Feb. 10, 2023).

One of the county officials in that case is also the lead defendant in another alleged bribery and kickback scheme that Sypek is handling. She described it as potentially “one of

the biggest corruption cases in L.A. history. ... It’s a huge case against several different groups of bigtime landlords and developers.” *County of Los Angeles v. Shepos*, 2:19-cv-01773 (C.D. Cal., filed March 11, 2019).

By paying bribes, the defendants landed large county leases worth hundreds of millions of dollars over the years. “A lot of these facts have been confirmed in criminal plea agreements,” she said. “It’s not every day you have evidence like that in a civil lawsuit.”

Earlier this year, Sypek settled a lawsuit between the former CEO of Stiiizy, the state’s largest cannabis retailer, and his former company. And she settled a lawsuit between the founding partners of the Red O restaurant group.

Last February, after more than a year of negotiations, she and co-counsel won final approval of a \$20 million settlement for a class of more than a million Prius owners alleging their cars had a defect that could throw them into “limp home mode” capable of traveling at no more than 15 miles per hour. *McCarthy v. Toyota Motor Corp*, 8:18-cv-00201 (C.D. Cal., filed Feb. 5, 2018).

Sypek said she was proud that the case pushed Toyota to issue two recalls to address the problem.