HansonBridgett



Gary A. Watt (Retired)

Former Partner
Former Chair, Appellate Practice Group

Hanson Bridgett LLP

Areas of Focus

- Appellate
- Litigation and Dispute Resolution
- Financial Services

Gary A. Watt retired from the practice of law in July 2025 after an accomplished career as a leading California appellate lawyer and certified appellate specialist. Gary joined Hanson Bridgett in 2016, where he served as Chair of the firm's Appellate Practice and played a pivotal role in building its reputation for excellence.

Throughout his nearly three decades of practice, Gary led numerous high-stakes appellate matters, achieving significant results for clients across industries. His work included landmark victories before the California Supreme Court and the Ninth Circuit. Known for his rigorous legal analysis, persuasive advocacy, and practical guidance, Gary was a trusted counselor to clients and colleagues alike.

Gary's commitment to the legal profession extended far beyond the courtroom. He was a faculty coach for national moot court teams, actively mentored young lawyers through the UC Law SF Appellate Project and within the firm, and generously shared his expertise as a frequent speaker on a wide range of appellate law topics. His passion for pro bono service and dedication to mentorship left a lasting mark on the next generation of appellate advocates and at Hanson Bridgett.

Publications

"Anti-SLAPP: When Partial Wins, Missed Appeals, and Fee Fantasies Collide," author, *The Daily Journal* (June 2025)

“Simultaneous § 998 offers: Divergent Bright Line Rules,” author, *The Daily Journal* (January 2025)

“Burden Lifted in Arbitration Waiver Cases,” coauthor, *The Daily Journal* (December 2024)

“Experts, case-specific facts, and hearsay,” *The Daily Journal* (April 2024)

“SB 365’s Departure from the Bielski Rule for FAA Cases May Lead to Further Litigation,” *The Daily Journal* (April 2024)

“Creative Expression & Lady Justice,” co-author, *The Daily Journal* (December 2023)

“Policing Hearsay,” *The Daily Journal* (October 2023)

“Evidence for Idiots: Logos, Dumbbells, and Hearsay,” *The Daily Journal* (June 2023)

“The Scope of Arbitration Clauses,” *The Daily Journal* (June 2023)

“Delegating Unconscionability to the Arbitrator,” *The Daily Journal* (February 2023)

“Appellate Oral Argument: The Ultimate Misnomer?,” *Appellate Insight* (December 2022)

“Staying Litigation While an Order Denying Arbitration is Appealed,” *The Daily Journal* (October 2022)

“Recent SCOTUS Opinions on Arbitration Statutes,” *The Daily Journal* (August 2022)

“Anti-SLAPP Motions and Hearsay,” *The Daily Journal* (July 2022)

“Can Arbitration Be Forced on Indigent Parties?,” *The Daily Journal* (June 2022)

“Judicial Review of Arbitration Injunctions,” *The Daily Journal* (April 2022)

“Disqualifying arbitrators under the California Arbitration Act,” *The Daily Journal* (February 2022)

“The Collateral Order Doctrine,” *The Daily Journal* (January 2022)

“Supreme Court to Resolve Split Over Post-Arbitration Motions,” *The Daily Journal* (December 2021)

“Appealing Orders Compelling Arbitration Under the FAA,” *USLAW Magazine Fall 2021* (September 2021)

"PAGA and FAA Preemption," *Daily Journal* (October 2021)

"May Arbitration Awards Violate Public Policy?," *Daily Journal* (July 2021)

"Case to Resolve Split on Stateside Discovery for Foreign Arbitration," *Daily Journal* (May 2021)

"Appealing Orders on Arbitration in Federal Court," *Daily Journal* (March 2021)

"Notice of Appeal: Back to Basics to Avoid Disaster," *Appellate Insight (January 2021)*

"Arbitrability: Searching for Assent," co-author, *Daily Journal* (January 2021)

"A Few 2020 California Supreme Court Cases for Civil Litigators," co-author, *Daily Journal* (December 2020)

"Consumer Arbitration Wrinkles," co-author, *Daily Journal* (November 2020)

"Appellate Myths & Realities," *Daily Journal* (August 2020)

"Is It Time to Let Go of the Bar Exam?," *The Recorder* (July 2020)

"Evidence: An Eternal Struggle," co-author, *Daily Journal* (May 2020)

"Summary Judgment & Hearsay Objections: Viable Since Sweetwater?," *Appellate Insight* (May 2020)

"Summary Judgment After Sweetwater: More Motions Denied," *Daily Journal* (January 2020)

"Costs and Attorney Fees on Appeal," *Appellate Insight Blog* (February 2019)

"Ruling Says Denial of Costs Doesn't Preclude Fee Award," *Daily Journal* (January 2019)

"Anti-SLAPP Motions: Use It or Lose It," author, *Appellate Insight Blog* (September 2018)

"California civil litigators are SLAPP - happy," *Daily Journal* (July 2018)

"People v. Sanchez, Hearsay, and Expert Testimony," co-author, *California Litigation* (June 2018) Republication by permission of California Litigation, the journal of the Litigation Section of the California Lawyers Association

"Say Yes to Pro Bono," *San Francisco Attorney* (June 2018)

"California anti-SLAPP in the 9th Circuit: Can it survive?" *Daily Journal* (May 2018)

"Will California's Anti-SLAPP Statute Survive?" *Appellate Insight Blog* (May 2018)

"Navigating Appeals," *Daily Journal* (April 2018)

"Anti-SLAPP Statutes In Federal Courts," *USLAW Magazine* (March 2018)

"Searching for perfection," *Daily Journal* (December 2017)

"Expert Testimony, Hearsay, and Summary Judgment," *Appellate Insight Blog* (October 2017)

"Hearsay and expert witnesses: relying or relating?," *Daily Journal* (October 2017)

"A paradigm shift on experts and hearsay in civil cases?," *Daily Journal* (September 2017)

"Ruling grapples with 998 offers, arbitration," *Daily Journal* (June 2017)

"Frivolous Appeals," *Daily Journal* (April 2017)

"New Year's resolution: filing appeals on time," *Daily Journal* (January 2017)

"Real estate duty decision could have big impact. Or not," *Daily Journal* (December 2016)

"2016 Opinions Provide 998 Guidance," *Daily Journal* (November 2016)

"Settling, Dismissing and Prevailing," *Daily Journal* (March 2016)

"State High Court Takes on Anti-SLAPP," *Daily Journal* (February 2016)

"Contractual Attorney Fees Conundrum," *Daily Journal* (December 2015)

"Independent contractor doctrine limited in ruling," co-author, *Daily Journal* (July 2015)

"When's an Action 'On the Contract' for Free Purposes?," *Daily Journal* (April 2014)

"Fly fishing and the appellate lawyering life," *Daily Journal* (October 2013)

"What the Dickens is the Law?," *Daily Journal* (September 2013)

"Your Skills: Oral Argument – Going All Out," *The Recorder* (August 2013)

"Multiple settlement offers: blurry or bright-line rules?," *Daily Journal* (June 2013)

"Your Skills: Appellate Brief Writing, Before, During and After," *The Recorder* (June 2013)

"Judicial notice: effective weapon or misfire?," *Daily Journal* (May 2013)

"State high court to hear settlement offer fee-shifting arguments," *The Daily Journal* (April 2013)

"High court set to examine prevailing party attorney fees," *The Daily Journal* (February 2013)

"Immigrant gets another chance to stay in U.S. despite kidnapping rap, 9th Circuit rules," *Daily Journal* (January 2013)

"Prevailing party attorney fees: battle or war?," *Daily Journal* (December 2012)

"Strategy in Section 998 offers to compromise," *Daily Journal* (August 2012)

"The outer limits: When the facts are not taken as true," *Daily Journal* (February 2012)

"Supreme Court Rolls Back Nondelegable Duties," *The Recorder* (August 2011)

"Masquerade: Identifying the Genuine Judgment," *Daily Journal* (July 2011)

"Summer Blockbusters: Will the State Supreme Court Deliver?," *Daily Journal* (June 2011)

"Home Improvement: When There's an Accident, Who's at fault?," *Daily Journal* (March 2011)

"Early 998 Offers: Wicked Weapon or Wise Tactic?," *Daily Journal* (February 2011)

"Make Me an Offer," *Daily Journal* (June 2009)

"Blood Sport," *Daily Journal* (June 2009)

"Warning: Hard Hat Area," *Daily Journal* (February 2009)

"Deconstructing Indemnity," *Daily Journal* (August 2008)

"Strict Construction," *Daily Journal* (May 2008)

"Arbitration: Be Careful What You Wish For," *Contra Costa Lawyer* (March 2008)

"Obtain a Ruling or Else," *Daily Journal* (February 2008)

"Damage Control," *Daily Journal* (June 2007)

"Arbitrary Restrictions," *Daily Journal* (February 2007)

“Home Alone,” *Daily Journal* (October 2006)

“Property Owners, Be Wary of ‘Imminent Peril,’” *Daily Journal* (August 2006)

“Analyzing Emotional Distress Damages,” *Contra Costa Lawyer* (April 2006)

“Interpreting Indemnity Agreements,” *Contra Costa Lawyer* (March 2006)

Presentations

“Civil Litigation Update - Recent Cases of Concern,” co-speaker, Contra Costa County Bar Association 30th MCLE Spectacular (November 2024)

“Advanced Oral Argument Skills,” 9th Annual Advanced Appellate Program, Pincus Professional Education (February 2024)

“Appeals from TROs and Preliminary Injunctions,” 8th Annual Advanced Appellate Program, Pincus Professional Education (February 2023)

“Litigation & Arbitration Roundup: Analyzing Recent Appellate Decisions Affecting Litigators,” 28th Annual MCLE Spectacular, Contra Costa County Bar Association (November 2022)

“The Collateral Order Doctrine,” 7th Annual Advanced Appellate Program, Pincus Professional Education (February 2022)

“The Supremes Said It. Now What??? A Review of Recent California Supreme Court Cases Impacting Civil Litigators,” 27th Annual MCLE Spectacular, Contra Costa County Bar Association (November 2021)

“Perfecting the Appeal: Preservation Jurisdiction & Prosecution,” CLA Annual Meeting (Sep 2021)

“Protecting the Record for State Criminal & Civil Appeals,” Contra Costa County Bar Association’s Appellate Section and Criminal Law Section Webinar (May 2021)

“The Supremes Said That??? A Review of Recent California Supreme Court Cases Impacting Civil Litigators,” 26th Annual MCLE Spectacular by Contra Costa County Bar Association (November 2020)

“Appellate Law,” USLAW NETWORK Worldwide Virtual Retreat: USLAW Short Takes: 2021 and Beyond (October 2020)

“Motor Carriers, Independent Repair Facilities, and the Non-delegable Duty Doctrine,” co-presenter, ATA Litigation Center’s Virtual Trucking Legal Forum (July 2020)

“Preclusive Effect of Appellate Decisions,” co-speaker, Pincus 5th Annual Advanced Appellate Conference (January 2020)

“The Supremes Said What?,” co-speaker, 25th Annual MCLE Spectacular (November 2019)

“Advanced Appellate Practice,” co-presenter, American Bar Association (January 2019)

“A Discussion with Justice Ignazio Ruvolo: Appellate Practice, Pitfalls and Pontifications,” Contra Costa County Bar Association (April 2018)

“The Record in the Era of Multimedia Trials,” 3rd Annual Advanced Appellate Conference (January 2018)

“Hearsay: Heresies & How Tos,” co-speaker, Contra Costa County Bar Association (“CCCBA”) (November 2017)

“Appellate Mediation: Why It Makes Sense,” Pincus 2nd Annual Appellate Conference (January 2017)

“Ethics in Appellate Advocacy,” Pincus 2nd Annual Appellate Conference (January 2017)

“Section 998 Offers: Turn A Loss Into A Win - Or Vice-Versa,” co-speaker, Association of Defense Counsel of Northern California and Nevada’s 57th Annual Meeting (December 2016)

“Ethics in Advocacy: Attorneys Behaving Badly,” co-speaker, Contra Costa County Bar Association’s 22nd Annual MCLE Spectacular! (November 2016)

“Advanced Civil Appellate Conference,” Pincus Professional Education (February 2016)

“Ethics in Advocacy,” Association of Defense Counsel (December 2015)

“Perfecting the Record for Appeal,” Contra Costa County Bar Association (November 2015)

“Expert Witnesses and Big Data,” Appraisal Institute (May 2015)

“A Discussion with Justice James A. Richman,” Contra Costa County Bar Association (April 2015)

“Perfecting the Record for Appeal,” Association of Defense Counsel (December 2014)

“California: A SLAPP Happy State?” Contra Costa County Bar Association (November 2014)

"The Appellate Process for Non-appellate Practitioners," Bridgeport Continuing Education (July 2014)

"A Discussion with Justice Ignazio J. Ruvolo," Contra Costa County Bar Association Appellate Practice Section (March 2014)

Published Decisions

Bring Back the Kern v. City of Bakersfield (April 2, 2025) Court of Appeal Case No. F087487 (reversal of preliminary injunction; water law dispute)

Coleman v. Newsom, 2025 WL 851077 (9th Cir. 3/19/2025) (reversal of fines/sanctions)

Ruelas v. County of Alameda, 108 F.4th 1208 (9th Cir. 7/26/2024) (labor law/wage claims)

Ruelas v. County of Alameda (Supreme Court, April 22, 2024) 15 Cal.5th 968 (labor law/wage claims)

Green Tree Headlands LLC v. Tara Crawford (2023) 316 Cal.Rptr.3d 297 (anti-SLAPP motion to malicious prosecution action)

Chevron U.S.A. Inc. v. County of Monterey (2023 Cal. Supreme Court) 20232 WL 4940263 (state law preemption)

Galanti v. Nevada Department of Corrections, 2023 WL 3067036 (9th Cir. 2023) (civil rights)

Cory Spencer v. City of Palos Verdes Estates (2023) 88 Cal.App.5th 849 (environmental; Coastal Act)

McWhinney Centerra v. Poag & McEwen, 486 P.3d 439 (Co. Court of Appeals 2021) (establishing that Colorado economic loss rule does not apply to intentional torts)

Diaz-Reynoso v. Barr, 968 F.3d 1070 (9th Cir. 2020) (administrative law)

Spencer v. Mowat (2020) 46 Cal.App.5th 1024 (anti-SLAPP statute & conspiracy)

Schwan v. Permann (2018) 28 Cal.App.5th 678 (trust interpretation)

Barrientos v. Lynch, 829 F.3d 1064 (9th Cir. 2016) (administrative law)

Medina-Nunez v. Lynch, 788 F.3d 1103 (9th Cir. 2015) (administrative law)

Velasquez v. Centrome, Inc. (2015) 233 Cal.App.4th 1191 (evidence law)

Castrijon-Garcia v. Holder, 704 F.3d 1205 (9th Cir. 2013) (immigration law)

Seabright Insurance Co. v. U.S. Airways (2011) 52 Cal.4th 590 (torts/administrative law)

Hernandez-Velasquez v. Holder, 611 F.3d 1073 (9th Cir. 2010) (administrative law)

Margaret W. v. Kelly R. (2006) 139 Cal.App.4th 141 (torts)

Perez v. Roe (2006) 146 Cal.App.4th 171 (constitutional law)

Press

"9th Circuit Upholds CCRC's US Tax Court Victory," Hanson Bridgett Press Release (October 2024)

"Should Pretrial Detainees Be Paid Minimum Wage for Work?," *The Daily Journal* (February 2024)

"Court Revives California Public Beach Harassment Case," *Law360* (March 2023)

Honors & Awards

California Lawyers Association, Wiley W. Manuel Pro Bono Legal Services Award (2020-2022)

Martindale-Hubbell, AV Preeminent Rating

Super Lawyers, Appellate; Business Litigation (2011-2023)

Professional Affiliations

Contra Costa County Bar Association, Chair: Appellate Practice Section

Professional Licenses

Certified Appellate Specialist

Education

J.D., UC Law San Francisco (Formerly UC Hastings) (1997)

B.S., *cum laude* California State University, Hayward (1992)

Admissions and Courts

Supreme Court of the United States

U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit

U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit

U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit

California Supreme Court

U.S. District Court for the Central District of California

U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California

U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California

U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California

California