

## J. Leah Castella

Partner

Oakland

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*Pronouns: she, her, hers*

Leah Castella is a partner in Burke's [Oakland](#) office. She received her J.D. with Honors from the University of Texas, Austin in 1999 and her B.A. in Philosophy from Lewis & Clark College in 1995. She currently serves as the General Counsel of Ironhouse Sanitary District, Valley of the Moon Water District, and Central Contra Costa Sanitary District and as the Assistant General Counsel for Union Sanitary District.

As a seasoned [public law](#) lawyer, Leah is familiar with the full range of laws affecting California public agencies, including the Brown Act, the Public Records Act, the Political Reform Act, Proposition 218, and the Public Trust Doctrine. She has particular expertise advising public agencies on governance, rate setting, election law, and constitutional law.

Leah is also an experienced litigator and appellate advocate. She has handled dozens of cases in state and federal court on behalf of public and private clients. And she has successfully argued over a dozen cases in the California Court of Appeal. Her areas of expertise include [eminent domain](#), [inverse condemnation](#), regulatory takings, municipal finance, government ethics and transparency, and constitutional challenges to local legislative enactments.

### RESULTS

Emeryville Transit Center Project Leaves The Station

### PUBLICATIONS

Revised Department of Finance Budget Trailer Bill Addresses  
Redevelopment Dissolution

### RECOGNITIONS

Womens eNews, 21 Leaders for the 21st Century, 2011

2003 Burton Award for Excellence in Legal Writing (with Raymond C.

### PRACTICES

Eminent Domain

Financial Institutions and  
Bankruptcy

Inverse Condemnation

Litigation

Public Law

### EDUCATION

J.D., University of Texas School  
of Law, with Honors, 1999

B.S., Philosophy, Lewis & Clark  
College, 1995

### ADMISSION

State Bar of California

Supreme Court of the United  
States

United States Court of Appeals  
for the Ninth Circuit

United States District Court for  
the Central District of California

United States District Court for  
the Eastern District of California

United States District Court for  
the Northern District of  
California

United States District Court for  
the Southern District of

California

**AFFILIATIONS**

Women’s Debate Institute,  
founder and Board Chair

Bay Area Urban Debate League,  
Board Member

Marshall and Kristen Palumbo)

**REPRESENTATIVE MATTERS**

- **HJTA v. City of Los Angeles.** Successfully defeated multiple trial court challenges to Proposition ULA, which imposed a transfer tax on real estate sales of \$5 million or more.
- **Nathu v. City of Oakland.** Successfully defeated a challenge to the City’s denial of land use authorization to construct a hotel.
- **California Apartment Association v. City of Richmond.** Successfully defeated a challenge to a rent control initiative enacted by the City of Richmond.
- **City of South Lake Tahoe Retiree’s Association v. City of South Lake Tahoe.** Successfully negotiated settlement to a dispute arising out of City’s changes to retiree health benefits that reduced the City’s retiree health liability from in excess of \$70 million to less than \$10 million.
- **Water Audit v. City of St. Helena.** Successfully negotiated settlement of dispute in exchange for City’s development and implementation of a bypass plan.
- **Uno Fratelli, LLC v. City of Napa.** Successfully negotiated settlement of land use dispute arising out of allegations of overburdening an easement.
- **City of Emeryville v. California Department of Finance.** Obtained a writ from the Court of Appeals directing the Department of Finance to recognize re-executed City/Agency agreements as enforceable obligations.
- **City of Watsonville v. California Department of Finance.** Obtained a writ from the Sacramento Superior Court directing the Department of to recognize reimbursement agreements as loans eligible for reinstatement.
- **City of Glendale v. California Department of Finance.** Obtained a writ from the Sacramento Superior Court directing the Department of Finance to calculate accumulated interest on reinstated loan in accordance with the variable LAIF rate from the date of loan origination.
- **Southgate v. California Department of Finance.** Obtained a writ from the Sacramento Superior Court directing the Department of Finance to approve reinstatement of a HUD loan to the former redevelopment agency.
- **Fresno v. California Department of Finance.** Obtained a writ from the Sacramento Superior Court directing the Department of Finance to permit reinstatement of City Agency Loans.
- **Daly City v. California Department of Finance.** Obtained a writ from the Sacramento Superior Court directing the Department of Finance to permit reinstatement of City Agency Loans.

- **City of Industry, et al v. City of Fillmore.** Successfully overturned a decision granting a demurrer without leave to amend and granting an AntiSLAPP motion.
- **Woodfin Suites Hotel v. City of Emeryville.** Successfully defeated writ action brought challenging City's enforcement of living wage ordinance.
- **Keffler v. Partnership Healthplan.** Successfully defeated writ of mandate brought to challenge pharmaceutical reimbursement rates; successfully defeated appeal of Trial Court's decision to deny the Writ.
- **Hidden Glen Partners v. City of Napa.** Obtained successful trial verdict in lawsuit brought by a landowner claiming that City had breached a contractual obligation to construct a park.
- **Canon Manor v. City of Rohnert Park.** Obtained summary judgment in a lawsuit brought to force refunds of over a million dollars in sewer connection fees and successfully defeated appeal of the Court's summary judgment ruling.
- **Desert Development v. Emeryville Redevelopment Agency.** Obtained demurrer without leave to amend in a multi-million dollar inverse condemnation action arising out of relocation of a billboard.
- **Indian Springs Mobile Home Park v. City of Rohnert Park.** Successfully demurred to an inverse condemnation claim based on a City's denial of a tentative map application for conversion of a mobile home park.
- **Sonoma Falls v Dry Creek Band of Pomo Indians.** Negotiated a fifty million dollar settlement for real estate developer in an action arising out of breach of a casino management agreement.