

Sacks Glazier Franklin & Lodise

Litigation for Substantial Trusts and Estates

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Ryan D. Houck is a trial lawyer practicing exclusively in the area of trust, estate and conservatorship litigation. Mr. Houck's cases include will and trust contests, and other challenges to estate plans, breach of fiduciary duty claims involving trustees and other fiduciaries, trustee accounting matters, and conservatorship proceedings. He represents both fiduciaries and beneficiaries, ranging from corporate trustees to charities and individuals, in such matters through trial and appeal.

Mr. Houck combines zealous advocacy with pragmatism, enabling him to achieve favorable and efficient results for his clients through skillful negotiation, strategic counsel and accomplished trial work. He offers comprehensive, results-oriented advice at all stages of representation. Mr. Houck is also sensitive to the personal dynamics and non-monetary components of trust, estate and conservatorship litigation, and he thoughtfully tailors his representation to reflect those case-specific situations and his clients' goals.

Obtaining favorable results for individual trustees, individual beneficiaries, corporate trustees and entities, nonprofit organizations and others, both through mediation and trial judgments, Mr. Houck's recent representative successes include the following:

- Defeated a conservatorship petition brought by his client's siblings against their high-net-worth mother in a complex, multi-week trial to judgment, resulting in his client's mother's strong religious convictions regarding her end-of-life care being honored.

- Represented a Fortune 500 bank in its capacity as trustee in a complex array of accounting and related disputes, resulting in no liability and a recovery of trustee's fees and attorneys' fees.
- Defended a Christian non-profit university's multimillion-dollar gift in a trust contest, including utilizing a novel application of statutory bar against trust contests, and obtaining the swift suspension and removal of an adverse and self-interested trustee.
- Represented multiple siblings as co-trustees against their sibling co-trustee's attempts to improperly prevent the sale of a closely-held family business for her personal benefit at the expense of the trust, resulting in the successful sale of that business and resignation of the rogue co-trustee.

Mr. Houck has been recognized as a Southern California "Rising Star" by Super Lawyers magazine every year since 2016, which is an achievement limited to no more than 2.5% of the lawyers in California. He has also been a speaker to the California State Bar Trust and Estate Section on a variety of trust and estate litigation issues, including appellate intricacies unique to probate litigation.

Prior to joining Sacks Glazier Franklin & Lodise LLP, Mr. Houck was a patent litigation associate at Kirkland & Ellis LLP, where he handled a variety of general and intellectual property litigation matters in state and federal courts, including the United States International Trade Commission. Mr. Houck is also a registered patent attorney.

Mr. Houck received his J.D., cum laude, from Georgetown University Law Center in 2011, and his B.S. in Science, Technology and International Affairs from Georgetown University in 2006.

Areas of Practice

- Trust and Estate Litigation
- Conservatorship Litigation
- Estate and Trust
- Appeals

Bar Admissions

- California, 2011
- U.S. District Court Central District of California
- U.S. District Court Southern District of California
- U.S. Patent and Trademark Office

Education

- **Georgetown University Law Center, Washington, District of Columbia**
 - J.D. - 2011
- **Georgetown University**
 - B.S. - 2006

Honors and Awards

- Southern California Super Lawyers - Rising Stars, 2015 - 2018
- Leon Robbin Patent Award
- CALI Award: Entertainment Law
- ABA/Bloomberg BNA Award for Excellence in Intellectual Property Law

Professional Associations and Memberships

- Los Angeles Estate Planning Council
- American Bar Association Real Property, Trust and Estate Law Section
- California Lawyers Association (formerly State Bar of California), Trusts and Estates Section
- Los Angeles County Bar Association, Trusts and Estates Section
- Los Angeles County Bar Association, Litigation Section

Past Employment Positions

- Kirkland & Ellis, Litigation Associate, 2011 - 2014

Pro Bono Activities

- Volunteering as a Deputy Prosecutor for the City of Hermosa Beach Prosecuting Misdemeanors

Published Works

- Textron and the Work Product Doctrine: Maintaining Attorney Independence for Non-Adversarial Advising,, 23 GEO. J. LEGAL ETHICS 649 , 2010

Classes/Seminars

- Introduction to Trust & Estate Litigation, American Bar Association, 2017
- Appellate Issues, Orange County Bar Association, 2016

Representative Cases

- Defeated a conservatorship petition brought by his client's siblings against their high-net-worth mother in a complex, multi-week trial to judgment, resulting in his client's mother's strong religious convictions regarding her end-of-life care being honored.
- Represented a Fortune 500 bank in its capacity as trustee in an accounting and breach of fiduciary duty dispute, resulting in a full victory for his client.

- Represented a Fortune 500 bank in its capacity as trustee in a complex array of accounting and related disputes, resulting in no liability and a recovery of trustee's fees and attorneys' fees.
- Represented a Christian non-prot organization as a beneficiary in a will contest involving a caregiver's attempt to alter the decedent's estate plan for her personal enrichment, resulting in a successful recovery for his client
- Represented a Christian non-prot organization as a beneficiary in a trust contest, resulting in opposing parties acceding to a multimillion-dollar settlement to his client after several days of trial.
- Defended a Christian non-prot university's multimillion-dollar gift in a trust contest, including utilizing a novel application of statutory bar against trust contests, and obtaining the swift suspension and removal of an adverse and self-interested trustee.
- Defended an executor at trial against a third-party claim to estate assets in a case of first impression involving conflicting revisions of the California Probate Code and the Uniform Statutory Form Power of Attorney.
- Represented a beneficiary at trial in a trust accounting dispute, including obtaining a rare judgment of bad faith resulting in recovery of attorneys' fees and costs for his client.
- Represented multiple siblings as co-trustees against their sibling co-trustee's attempts to improperly prevent the sale of a closely-held family business for her personal benefit at the expense of the trust, resulting in the successful sale of that business and resignation of the rogue co-trustee.
- Defended an individual trustee against multimillion-dollar claims, resulting in a full dismissal of plaintiff's case prior to trial.
- Represented a modest-income individual beneficiary in trust contest, resulting in a highly-favorable pre-litigation settlement with minimal cost to the client.
- Represented an individual trustee on appeal from a prior adverse trial court ruling, resulting in the adverse ruling being vacated.
- Represented a successor conservator in litigation against the former conservator for waste perpetrated during the former conservator's tenure, resulting in a financial recovery for the conservatorship estate.
- Obtained numerous other favorable results for individual trustees, individual beneficiaries, corporate trustees and entities, nonprot organizations and others, both through mediation and trial judgments.

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High Net Worth 2018
Private Wealth Disputes



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