

## THE LOS ANGELES AREA'S

BEST  
LAWYERS®THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO LEGAL REPRESENTATION  
IN THE GREATER LOS ANGELES AREA

2006 EDITION

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## INTRODUCTION

L.A. SHINES WITH LEGAL TALENT  
TAKE YOUR PICK FROM *the Area's Best*

**I**t's no surprise Los Angeles created the celebrity lawyer. This is a town full of legal stars. And whether it's in show business or in the legal world, Los Angeles is not the kind of town where being good enough is ever good enough.

If you're looking for a lawyer in a town full of legal talent, there's no reason to settle for second best. You want to be sure you've done everything within your power to get the best possible lawyer for yourself, your business, and your family.

There's no reason to rely on trial and error to choose an advocate. An awful lot of names appear on the roll of bar-accredited attorneys, and some people will have you believe that choosing one attorney versus another is about the same as selecting a gas station. Nowadays, of course, people tend to pick pumps pretty much on price. But when folks shop for legal services simply according to cost, they usually get what they pay for—and sometimes a great deal less. Don't choose randomly. Asking around is one way to find a lawyer—assuming that the people you ask happen to be experts on the quality of legal advice. Or you could search law journals and law firm marketing materials. But those sources can hide inferior skills,

and they never reveal the most frequent complaint of dissatisfied clients: indifferent client service. Some lawyers take a retainer one day and forget your name the next.

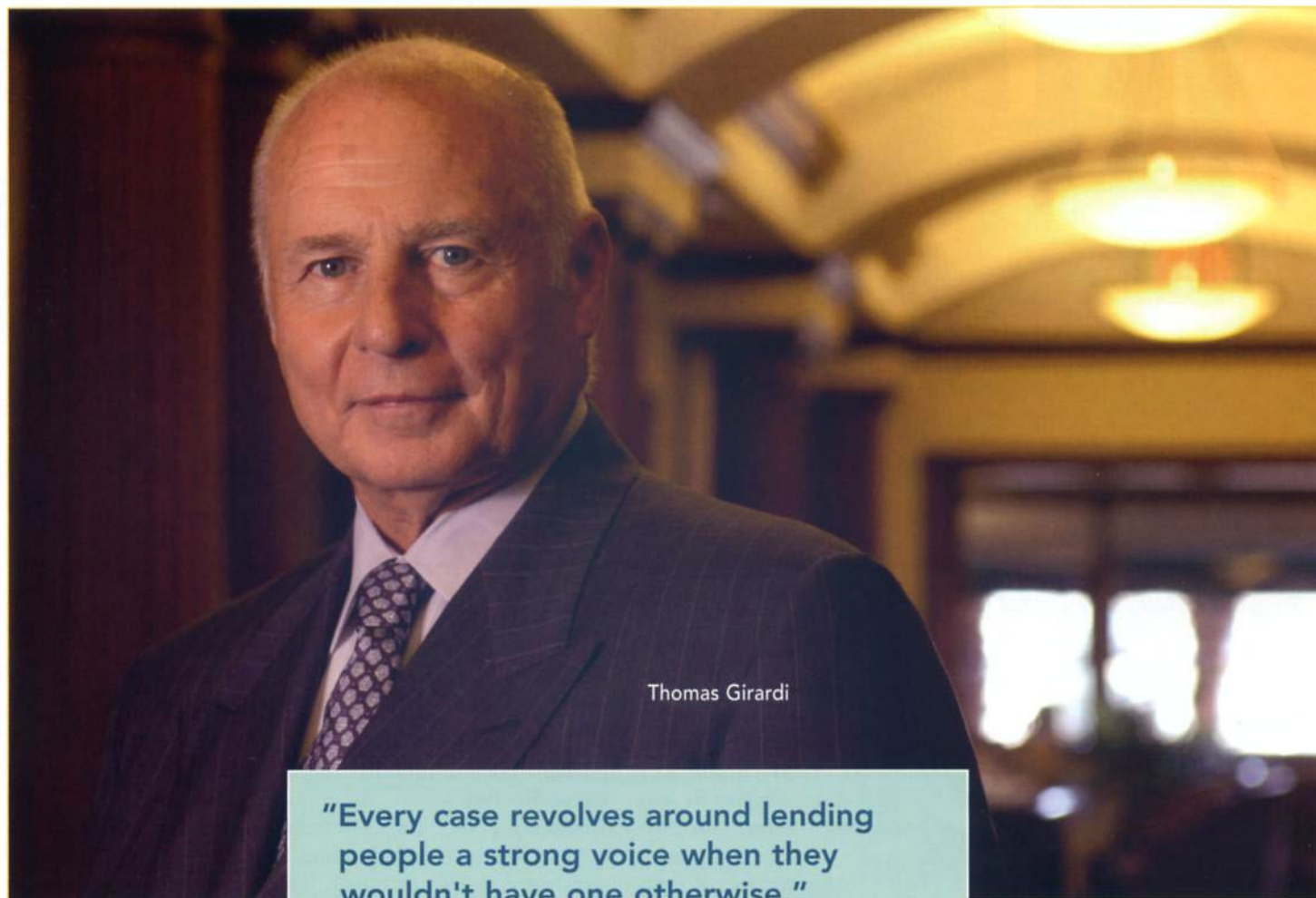
Thankfully, the lawyer-selection process does not have to be such a forbidding task. The finest legal minds are in this directory, The Los Angeles Area's Best Lawyers®, drawn from The Best Lawyers in America®. These first-tier attorneys, listed according to practice area specialty, were nominated by and voted for by their peers. They can't pay to get their names included on the list, and they have to remain at the top of their game to stay on it. Only Best Lawyers and their firms were invited to purchase the firm profiles/advertisements that accompany this guide.

Best Lawyers, the leading referral list in the legal profession, teamed with ALM, the leading provider of legal news and resources for diverse professionals, to provide this invaluable resource. No guide makes hiring a lawyer automatic. But this reliable, useful directory makes it easier to find superior legal representation.

In a town full of stars, talent rules. Choose the best.

—Adam Charles

## GIRARDI &amp; KEESE



Thomas Girardi

"Every case revolves around lending people a strong voice when they wouldn't have one otherwise."

Everything you need to know about Thomas Girardi and the 31 attorneys at his Los Angeles-based plaintiffs' personal injury firm can be found in the letters that continually pour in from clients. "We got a note a couple of years ago about a class-action suit that we had filed against a company that cheated people on television rentals," says Mr. Girardi, who founded the firm in the 1960s with partner Robert Keese. "One client in the class-action got a \$1,000 refund. That was a lot of money to her, and she wrote to thank us for our help. Sometimes the rewards are not monetarily huge to us, but are huge to the people who are affected." Then there's the man who is wheelchair-bound for life, but was able to pay off his mortgage with his settlement — and who keeps in touch with the firm more than three years after his case was resolved.

**TO MR. GIRARDI, THIS IS THE TRUE DEFINITION OF REWARD:** to be able to give voice to those who would ordinarily be voiceless. "It's only because of law firms like ours that we are able to keep corporations who want to cheat close to first base," he says. "We have the ability to make them answer." It's a simple philosophy, says Mr. Girardi, named one of the Los Angeles area's "Best Lawyers®" — and one that applies across the board. "To us, it doesn't matter if we're representing someone who was injured by taking Phen-Fen, or who got cheated by an energy company that charged too much," he says. "Every case revolves around lending people a strong voice when they wouldn't have one otherwise."

**TO BE SURE,** Mr. Girardi knows that he doesn't sound much different from many other plaintiff's attorneys — but when he says it, you definitely get the feeling he's not just feeding you some line. "I'm not some big-time moralist, and I don't want to pitch myself that way," he says. "But the whole law firm protects the regular person."

**SO WHAT MAKES GIRARDI & KEESE TICK?** For one thing, there's its culture. The firm has created an atmosphere in which great ideas are cultivated and then shared. "No one ever leaves here," says Mr. Girardi. And he means it: The average secretary has been with the firm for 22 years — with some as much as 40 years under their belt. The same goes for its lawyers: Mr. Girardi's brother, Jack, practices at the firm as well. "Cooperation is definitely our model," he notes.

**BUT DON'T BE FOOLED BY THE NICE-GUY ATTITUDE.** When a case goes to trial, Mr. Girardi and his colleagues come out swinging. "This is a law firm that no kidding tries cases," he says. "We have 12 lawyers that sit on the American Board of Trial Advocates. We definitely know how and when to litigate." It's all in the name of justice — a term Mr. Girardi and his colleagues don't take for granted. "I truly think the whole law firm spends its entire legal life protecting the little guys," he says. "If I could do anything in the world, I'd still be here tomorrow morning at seven o'clock."

## GIRARDI &amp; KEESE

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## METHODOLOGY

This list is excerpted from the 2007 edition of *The Best Lawyers in America*, the preeminent referral guide to the legal profession in the United States. Published since 1983, *Best Lawyers* lists attorneys in 80 specialties, representing all 50 states and Washington, DC, who have been chosen through an exhaustive survey in which thousands of the nation's top lawyers confidentially evaluate their professional peers. The 2007 edition of *Best Lawyers*, published in November 2006, is based on more than 1.9 million evaluations of lawyers by other lawyers.

The method used to compile *Best Lawyers* remains unchanged since the first edition was compiled more than 20 years ago. Lawyers are chosen for inclusion **based solely on a vote of their peers**. Listings cannot be bought, and no purchase is required to be included. In fact, a lawyer is required to do absolutely nothing to be listed — not even to vote or to fill out forms — nothing, except to receive high votes from his or her peers. In this regard, *Best Lawyers* remains the gold standard of reliability and integrity in lawyer ratings.

The nomination pool for the 2007 edition consisted of (1) all lawyers whose names appeared in the previous edition of *Best Lawyers*, (2) new nominees solicited from listed attorneys, and (3) lawyers nominated by third parties (e.g., firm marketing directors) and *sua sponte* since the previous survey. For existing specialties, the voting pool consisted of previous listees in each specialty. For new specialties, the voting pool consisted of lawyers with multiple nominations in each specialty and, in some cases, lawyers listed in related specialties. In general, lawyers were asked to vote only on nominees in their own specialty in their own jurisdiction. Lawyers in closely related specialties were asked to vote across specialties, as were lawyers in smaller jurisdictions. Where specialties are national or international in nature, lawyers were asked to vote nationally as well as locally. Voting lawyers were also given an opportunity to offer more detailed comments on nominees. Each year, half of the voting pool receives fax or email ballots; the other half is polled by phone.

Voting lawyers were provided this general guideline for determining

if a nominee should be listed among "the best": "If you had a close friend or relative who needed a real estate lawyer (for example), and you could not handle the case yourself, to whom would you refer them?" All votes and comments were solicited with a guarantee of confidentiality — a critical factor in the viability and validity of *Best Lawyers* surveys. To ensure the rigor of the selection process, lawyers were urged to use only their highest standards when voting, and to evaluate each nominee based only on his or her individual merits. The additional comments were used to make more accurate comparisons between voting patterns and weight votes accordingly. *Best Lawyers* uses various methodological tools to identify and correct for anomalies in both the nomination and voting process.

Ultimately, of course, a lawyer's inclusion is based on the subjective judgments of his or her fellow attorneys. While it is true that the lists may at times disproportionately reward visibility or popularity, the breadth of the survey, the candor of the respondents, and the sophistication of the polling methodology largely correct for any biases.

For all these reasons, *Best Lawyers* lists continue to represent the most reliable, accurate, and useful guide to the best lawyers in the United States available anywhere.

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