



STEVEN NICHOLS

Partner

Litigation and Trial

Orange County

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Steve Nichols has over 30 years of experience as a construction and commercial law and litigation specialist, and is co-chair of Rutan & Tucker's Construction Law Group. He represents prime and specialty contractors, manufacturers and suppliers, institutional and private owners, developers, builders, design professionals, lenders, insurers, distributors, and others in business and construction law matters.

Steve has assisted clients in negotiating and drafting a wide array of construction and commercial agreements, and has extensive experience and an impeccable record as a courtroom trial lawyer, including matters involving large infrastructure projects, transit and highway projects, commercial structures, power plant construction and financing arrangements, public facility development and construction, manufacturing and other facilities.

He has extensive experience in state, federal and appellate courts, arbitration and mediation proceedings, and also serves as an arbitrator on the American Arbitration Association's large complex case panel of arbitrators.

Most recently, Steve was selected as one of California's Top 100 Lawyers chosen by the Daily Journal, and has also been voted by OC Metro as one of their "Top 25." He achieved these honors for his exemplary courtroom victories, extensive construction law transactional experience, numerous large awards, and significant settlements including several large awards against the California Department of Transportation, among others.

Areas of Expertise

- Construction Law and Litigation
- Business and Commercial Litigation

Representative Matters/Cases

Related Services

- Litigation and Trial
- Construction
- Infrastructure, Public-Private Partnerships (P3)
- Business and Commercial Litigation

Related Industries

- Builders and Land Developers
- Construction
- Infrastructure/Public-Private Partnerships (P3)

Bar & Court Admissions

- State Bar of California, 1980
- U.S. District Court 9th Circuit 1980
- U.S. District Court for the Central District of California 1980
- U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California 1983
- U.S. District Court for the

- Prosecution of delay and extra work claims by a national prime contracting firm arising from construction of a medical research facility.
- Negotiating and drafting complex construction agreements and related documentation for a California hydrogen gas production facility.
- Prosecution of contract claims by an international automotive racing team under a sponsorship agreement.
- Prosecution of differing site conditions claims, productivity claims, and time extension requests by a national heavy engineering prime contracting firm against a state highway agency.
- Prosecution of contract claims by an international prime contracting firm in connection with the design and installation of a voice and data communications system for a state university campus.
- Defense of claims against a national banking institution/construction lender arising from the development of an office complex in Southern California.
- Prosecution of cost and impact claims by a prime contracting firm arising from design and construction of multiple power generating facilities throughout California.
- Defense of a national engineering firm in connection with unfair competition and trade secret claims brought by a competitor.

Northern District of
California 1988

- U.S. District Court for the
Eastern District of
California 1997

Education

- University of Southern
California, Gould School of
Law (J.D., 1980)
- California State University
(B.A., 1977), cum laude

Publications

- "On the Law - Construction," Orange County Register, July 2014
- The Need For P3 - Public Private Partnerships Can Help Bridge America's
Infrastructure Gap, DBIA Newsletter, Spring 2013

Awards & Honors

- Best Lawyers In America, Lawyer of the Year 2021



- Best Lawyers in America, 2016-2024



- Southern California “Super Lawyers”
- California Top 100 Lawyers (Daily Journal Publication)
- Orange County Top 25 (OC Metro Publication)
- AV® Preeminent™ rating with LexisNexis/Martindale Hubbell

Community Affiliations

- American Arbitration Association Arbitrator, Member of the Large Complex Case Panel of Arbitrators for Commercial and Construction Industry Disputes
- General Counsel and Board Member, Big Brothers & Big Sisters of Orange County

Memberships & Associations

- Orange County Bar Association (Construction Law Section)
- American Bar Association Forum Committee on the Construction Industry