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Daily Journal Names Goetz and Fisher 2021 Attorneys of the Year in California

March 19, 2021



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LOS ANGELES—March 19, 2021—The *Daily Journal* has selected O'Melveny partner [Richard Goetz](#) and special counsel [Jeffrey Fisher](#) as 2021 "California Lawyer Attorneys of the Year." The annual accolades, known as the CLAY Awards, honor 12 California lawyers for legal achievements with a significant impact on public policy, the law, the profession, or a particular practice area.

Goetz, co-chair of O'Melveny's Litigation Department, was honored for his work representing insurers in multiple US class actions and individual cases stemming from the pandemic.

"The stakes were enormous, with mushrooming claims threatening to push the insurance industry to its limits," the *Daily Journal* observed in its profile of Goetz. "In what became the centerpiece of his effort, he served as lead lawyer for the insurance industry as it pushed back against plaintiffs' effort to centralize more than 130 cases against multiple insurers." In August 2020, the *Daily Journal* noted, a judicial panel on multidistrict litigation not only denied industry-wide centralization but also rejected creation of an insurer-specific MDL for Chubb. Reuters reported that the decision allowed the insurance industry to avoid "what could have been one of the most consequential MDLs in U.S. litigation history."

"The breadth of impact of the pandemic was the biggest I've seen in my career," Goetz told the *Daily Journal*.

Fisher was honored for his US Supreme Court win in *Ramos v. Louisiana*, a case that found it unconstitutional to convict criminal defendants of crimes without the unanimous vote of a jury.

"The challenge for Fisher was to persuade the U.S. Supreme Court that its own longstanding precedent on the right to a unanimous jury verdict in serious criminal cases required a second look," the *Daily Journal* noted. "He overcame the odds and prevailed, 6-3, attaining an ideologically splintered majority that included Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Sonia M. Sotomayor, Brett

M. Kavanaugh and Neil M. Gorsuch, who wrote the opinion.” Adopting Fisher’s argument, the Court found the US Constitution bans non-unanimous jury verdicts in cases involving serious crimes. The decision affects defendants and inmates in Louisiana and Oregon, the only states that have allowed such verdicts in recent years, a legacy of century-old laws rooted in white supremacy.

“The case was important because it was an opportunity to stamp out a scurrilous vestige of Jim Crow that had persisted far too long,” Fisher, who has argued more than 40 cases before the High Court, told the publication, adding it was gratifying “to establish a fundamental building block of our system, the basis and essence of a fair trial.”

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