

# Daily Journal

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## TOPWOMEN LAWYERS

The Daily Journal's Annual List of  
Leading Women Lawyers in California

### Tracey A. Kennedy

**Sheppard, Mullin, Richter  
& Hampton LLP**  
Los Angeles

**Practice Type:**  
Litigation

**Specialty:**  
Business



In some ways Kennedy's law practice is like law school. Often called into cases just before trial, she has to learn a lot about a case in a short amount of time.

"You kind of camp out like you're back in school for finals."

Kennedy's practice involves employment law trials almost exclusively, and she led several trial teams this year. Because the cases haven't settled, they often involve characters and surprises, she said. That was the case in a trial she won while defending a grocery

store chain, she said.

"Whole foods, they're very principled, and the plaintiff was just unreasonable," Kennedy said. Her pretrial preparation

led her from surprising fact to surprising fact, she said. "It was a wacky case all around."

She also successfully defended St. Jude Medical Inc. from claims it was responsible for sexual harassment and other harms allegedly suffered by an employee. At trial, the jury decided the company wasn't liable.

Kennedy said she didn't plan to become a trial specialist, but after she started trying cases on her own after about five years as an associate, it became clear she had a talent for it.

"People started calling me to try some of their cases," she said.

Kennedy still gets her share of pretrial victories, too. She defeated a case at summary judgment on behalf of client Jones Day, which was fighting allegations of discrimination and retaliation from a legal secretary.

She said she's likely one of the few employment lawyers to specialize in trials. That's because of high settlement and dismissal rates in the field.

"It doesn't make sense to go to trial unless you really have to," Kennedy said. "It's not something I encourage."

— Laura Hautala