

Sean P.J. Coyle

Partner

San Francisco

Details

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Sean Coyle is an experienced trial lawyer who helps clients solve complex problems. Sean has worked on a broad range of cases, including commercial litigation, white collar criminal and enforcement matters, regulatory proceedings, government tort claims, coverage disputes, tax controversies, and securities litigation. Sean recognizes that the impact of any given case on a client is rarely limited to the forum in which the controversy is litigated. He takes a holistic approach to advising clients so that they can achieve the right result in the litigation in a manner that best serves their overall interests.

Sean has represented clients in major civil and criminal cases and sensitive investigations involving publicly traded companies, corporate officers, and public agencies and officials. He has substantial experience defending clients in regulatory investigations, including before the Securities and Exchange Commission and the California Public Utilities Commission. Sean has conducted internal investigations of public entities and corporations concerning accounting, financial compliance, grants management, and ethics issues, including as part of a federally appointed monitorship. And he has litigated in state and federal courts and before regulatory agencies. His clients regularly turn to him for common sense legal advice to fit sophisticated business solutions.

Sean is co-chair of the firm's Litigation practice.

Prior to joining Coblentz, Sean served as an Assistant United States Attorney in the Major Frauds and Special Prosecutions Section of the United States Attorney's Office in San Diego. He investigated and prosecuted cases involving virtually every kind of fraud, including securities and insider trading, defense procurement, health care, and tax and bank fraud, as well as cases involving public corruption, obstruction of justice, and money laundering crimes. As a prosecutor, Sean worked extensively on criminal matters that included parallel civil enforcement and qui tam proceedings with agencies such as the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, and the Department of Health and Human Services. Sean served as the Southern District of California's Health Care Fraud Coordinator, responsible for overseeing the district's healthcare and life sciences-related criminal investigations.

Sean also previously worked for Latham & Watkins, LLP, in securities litigation, white collar criminal defense, and regulatory investigations.

Sean earned his J.D. from the Maurer School of Law at Indiana University – Bloomington, where he graduated magna cum laude with election to the Order of the Coif, and where he served as a Managing Editor of the Indiana Law Journal. Prior to law school, Sean received his B.A. in history from Arizona State University in Tempe, Arizona.

Notable Representations

Represented the City of Oakland in the *Ghost Ship Warehouse Fire* litigation and related criminal proceeding.

Represented Pacific Gas and Electric Company in the *Oroville Dam Cases* arising out of the 2017 catastrophic failure of the spillway of the Oroville Dam, resulting in the evacuation of the town of Oroville.

Part of the defense team in *United States v. Pacific Gas and Electric Company*, a four-month criminal trial and one of the most complicated corporate criminal cases in the history of the Northern District of California, which stemmed from investigations into PG&E's gas safety practices following a transmission pipeline explosion in San Bruno, California. The case started with government allegations that could have resulted in a fine of over \$1 billion, and ended with dismissal or acquittal on 22 of the 28 counts charged, and a total fine of \$3 million.

Represented the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) in an independent review and audit of two "fusion centers" intended to facilitate information-sharing between states.

Represented the controller of a pre-IPO technology company in a Securities and Exchange Commission enforcement action involving allegations of financial misstatements and omissions, resulting in a declination and no claims brought against the client.

Represented the CFO of a publicly-traded media company in Securities and Exchange Commission enforcement action, resulting in a favorable settlement.

Represented a Fortune 200 company in regulatory and criminal investigations alleging improper contacts with the company's regulators.

Represented a Fortune 100 software company and several of its officers and directors in a multi-billion dollar securities fraud class action, resulting in a complete summary judgment victory.

Part of the team appointed to monitor the Utah Transit Authority pursuant to a non-prosecution agreement with the United States Attorney's Office for the District of Utah concerning compliance and ethics issues, including federal grants management.

Represented numerous individuals as witnesses and targets before federal and state criminal and regulatory investigative agencies.

Represented a public utility in major rate cases before the California Public Utilities Commission.

Trial counsel to an NFL franchise in one of the largest possessory interest tax controversies ever before a California Board of Assessment Appeals, which resulted in a half-billion-dollar reduction in the assessed value of property interest.

Honors & Awards

Sean is ranked as a Leading Lawyer by Chambers USA in the California Litigation: White Collar Crime & Government Investigations category. A client notes, "Sean is a very sensible, steady and smart lawyer." As a prosecutor, Sean was recognized with an award for extraordinary dedication from a United States Inspectors General national council, and received commendations from the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Bureau of Prisons.

Professional Activities

Sean is a member of the California State Bar, the Bar Association of San Francisco, and the Conference of California Public Utility Counsel.

Education

- J.D., magna cum laude Maurer School of Law at Indiana University, Bloomington (2004)
- B.A., Arizona State University (2001)