



Elizabeth Dorsi

Partner

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Elizabeth Dorsi represents clients in disputes ranging from high-stakes civil litigation and trial to pre-litigation conflict resolution. Elizabeth leverages her practical experience handling a wide range of matters in state and federal trial courts, on appeal, and in arbitration to address her clients legal needs.

Her practice focuses on complex litigation with an emphasis on trust, estate, and probate litigation, unfair competition, elder abuse claims, false advertising consumer class action defense, breach of contract claims, and business dissolution disputes. She uses a combination of strategic, big-picture thinking, and close attention to detail to develop creative solutions when none appear to exist. Elizabeth focuses day-to-day primarily on advising clients on litigation risks and strategy, briefing dispositive motions, taking and defending depositions, and preparing for trial.

In her trust and estate litigation practice, Elizabeth regularly represents trustees and beneficiaries in a range of complex disputes, including trust administration claims, beneficiary disputes, will and trust challenges, disputes regarding disbursements owed to income and HEMS beneficiaries, and claims of breach of trust, undue influence, and elder abuse. She further leverages Farella's extensive expertise in family wealth and tax planning to advise her clients on tax efficient solutions to their trust and estate disputes.

An experienced trial lawyer, Elizabeth successfully represented a developer in a complex Unfair Competition Law action brought by a District Attorney's office alleging numerous "malicious" unlawful acts and omissions arising over a multi-year period from a large pre-historic Native American cemetery that was discovered and damaged during construction of a residential development project. After a month-long bench trial, the court found no unlawful acts and awarded a complete defense victory. She has additionally first-chaired five jury trials to verdict and has further experience representing clients in bench trials and evidentiary hearings arising from her trust and estate litigation practice.

Elizabeth has an active pro bono practice. She successfully argued the Ninth Circuit habeas appeal for a death row inmate, which resulted in her client's 40-year-old conviction being overturned because the prosecutor had engaged in unconstitutional racial discrimination during jury selection. She has also represented parties in unlawful detainer actions, SSDI administrative appeals, and civil rights class actions challenging California's DNA collection law and juvenile detention practices.

Elizabeth served as a judicial clerk for the Honorable William B. Shubb of the United States District Court for the Eastern District of California, and as a legal intern with the San Francisco District Attorney's Office.

Distinctions

- *Best Lawyers in America*: Ones to Watch, Commercial Litigation (2021, 2023); Litigation—Trusts and Estates (2025)
- Benchmark Litigation, 40 & Under List - West (2025)
- Northern California *Super Lawyers Rising Stars* in Business Litigation (2020-2022)

Memberships and Affiliations

Services

- Appellate Litigation
- Business Litigation
- Consumer Products + Manufacturing
- Product Liability and Stewardship
- Family Wealth
- Financial Services
- Fintech
- Private Client
- Ultra-High Net Worth

Education

- Harvard Law School (J.D., 2011)
 - executive editor, *Harvard Law Review*
- University of California, Berkeley (B.A., 2007)
 - director, Parliamentary Debate Team

Bar Admissions

- California

Clerkships

- U.S. District Court (E.D. Cal.), William B. Shubb

- Executive Committee, Harvard Law School Alumni Association of Northern California (2019-present)
- Board of Directors, Pacific Crest Trail Association (2021-present)
- Board of Directors, AIDS Legal Referral Panel (2014-2016)

Experience

Trust and Estate Litigation

Regularly represents trustees and beneficiaries in a range of trust and estate litigation matters, including in disputes regarding trust administration, the proper income owed to income beneficiaries, identifying remainder beneficiaries, claims of undue influence and breach of fiduciary duties, and the nomination of successor trustees.

Unfair Competition Law Litigation

Successfully represented a developer in an Unfair Competition Law action brought by a District Attorney's office alleging numerous "malicious" unlawful acts and omissions arising from a large pre-historic Native American cemetery that was discovered and damaged during construction of a residential development project. After a 4+ week bench trial, the court found no unlawful acts and awarded a complete defense victory.

False Advertising and Labeling

Representing companies in the cosmetic and personal care industries in pre-litigation dispute resolution and litigation on false advertising, unfair competition, and CLRA claims. Successfully won dismissal of unfair competition claims against a cosmetic company on the basis that the plaintiff's labeling claims were preempted by the FDCA.

Elder Abuse Litigation

Represented a developer against claims of fraud and elder abuse arising out of a real estate transaction. The matter resolved with an early settlement favorable to our client.

Payment Processing Litigation

Won summary judgment on behalf of a financial services provider in a business tort action. The lawsuit accused our client of unlawfully terminating payment processing services for the plaintiffs after their accounts were flagged for illegal transactions.

CFTC Enforcement Action

Representing a precious metals retailer in both the district court and the Ninth Circuit in a federal government enforcement action brought by the CFTC alleging off-exchange transactions and fraud. The lawsuit raises novel issues regarding the CFTC's jurisdiction, including whether depository delivery of financed metals results in "actual delivery" under the Commodity Exchange Act and the scope of the CFTC's anti-fraud jurisdiction. Also representing the company in a parallel class action.

Mass Tort Litigation

Represented a nuclear fuel processing company in a mass tort action brought by over one hundred plaintiffs alleging personal injury and property damage. Won a complete victory at summary judgment.

Publications

SB 54: Shifting the Burden to Producers To Address California's Plastic Pollution

Daily Journal - New California Laws

November 28, 2022

Regulatory and Litigation Risks From California's New Recycling Laws

Industry Today

Outside the Office

When Elizabeth isn't going the distance for her clients, she is a long-distance hiker. Before joining Farella, she hiked from Mexico to Canada on the Pacific Crest Trail (2,650 miles) during a record snow year, averaging 20+ miles a day for five months. She's also hiked the Camino de Santiago (550 miles), John Muir Trail (220 miles), Tahoe Rim Trail (170 miles), and portions of the Yosemite High Route. Elizabeth enjoys discussing ultralight backpacking gear and is currently on the lookout for her next 100+ mile adventure.