ArentFox Schiff LLP
Attorneys

Debra Albin-Riley

PARTNER

Recognized as one of California's top health care lawyers, Debra guides clients through the most sophisticated and cutting-edge health care litigation matters, particularly those involving medical staffs and peer review.



Industries

Health Care
— Government Investigations
— Hospitals & Health Systems
— Medical Staff Counseling & Peer Review
Consumer Products
— Prop 65 Counseling & Litigation

Practices

Complex Litigation
— Class Actions

Languages

English

Education

University of Southern California, JD, 1983

University of California, Los Angeles, BA, Art History, cum laude, 1980

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Debra focuses her practice on complicated health care and medical staff peer review hearings and litigation. She represents many of California's largest hospitals, health systems, and medical staffs, and has served as the lead attorney on numerous high-profile federal, state, and appellate matters in courts and tribunals across the country. A tenacious health care litigator, Debra has argued before the California Supreme Court and the California Court of Appeals, and prevailed in establishing significant anti-SLAPP protections for medical staffs in peer review matters.

Debra also applies her robust litigation experience to sophisticated commercial contract disputes, class actions, and Proposition 65 matters. Her extensive experience allows her to take matters through hearing, trial, and appeal and skillfully negotiate positive resolutions for her clients. She has been rated among the "Top Health Care Lawyers" and "Top Women Lawyers" in California by *Daily Journal* as a result of her impressive track record.

As noted by *Chambers USA*, Debra's clients describe her as "knowledgeable, experienced, forceful, and articulate – all qualities that are critical in this area." She is a Senior Fellow of the Litigation Counsel of America, a trial lawyer honorary society composed of attorneys selected based upon excellence and accomplishment in litigation, and superior ethical reputation.

Client Work

Health Care Litigation

Debra counsels and represents hospitals, health systems, and medical staffs in matters relating to peer review, including physician corrective action, bylaws revision, licensing, privileges, exhaustion of administrative remedies, California Evidence Code Section 1157 protection, whistleblower claims, government and internal investigations, exclusive contracts, residency programs, and Anti-SLAPP issues.

She argued before the California Supreme Court in a closely watched case addressing medical disciplinary peer review and the anti-SLAPP statute, which aims to protect certain protected activity

from meritless lawsuits. The case received widespread attention, including an article in *Law360*. In a decision issued in July of 2021, the Court agreed with several arguments Debra presented, establishing that many aspects of the peer review process are protected under the anti-SLAPP statute. In 2022, Debra argued the same case before the Court of Appeal on remand. She secured another published decision establishing absolute immunity from liability for many common peer review activities, including reporting to licensing agencies, peer review settlement negotiations, and communications with other hospitals and medical staffs.

Debra's representative health care matters include:

- Successfully resolving two whistleblower lawsuits filed against California's leading nonprofit hospital, ending a decade-long dispute with a walk-away settlement.

- Obtaining dismissal of writ actions brought by a physician whose privileges had been suspended by the hospital's board in compliance with a rarely-used statute. Debra also obtained a substantial attorneys' fees award against the physician.

- Representing a hospital in Fresno, California, in connection with an exclusive contract for hospitalist services.

- Serving as the lead trial and litigation lawyer for a hospital defending against whistleblower retaliation claims brought by a physician resident. Debra eviscerated most of the resident's claims by summary adjudication, resulting in an extremely favorable settlement for the client.

- Representing a major health care system serving Central California, handling medical staff peer review matters, including litigation. She served as the lead lawyer in a medical staff hearing that involved over 30 sessions, defending the medical staff 's recommendation to terminate a physician's hospital privileges. Debra recently obtained a favorable settlement for one of the system's hospitals in a whistleblower retaliation case. This client also calls on Debra to lead confidential investigations on behalf of its medical staff.

- Handling medical staff and hospital-related litigation and counseling for peer review and other matters for an integrated Catholic health care delivery system that provides a full range of care facilities including 16 acute care hospitals, home health agencies, hospice care, and other services.

- Securing a rare victory in successfully dismissing a complaint without leave to amend for the medical staff of a hospital located in Indio, California.

- Negotiating numerous settlements between physicians, medical staffs, and hospitals in contentious peer review matters.

Proposition 65, Product Liability, and Consumer Fraud Litigation and Counseling

Debra has significant experience representing clients in product liability, toxic tort, consumer fraud, and Proposition 65 matters. Debra also has experience in claims involving the use of "natural" in labeling and advertising food products.

For several years, Debra traveled throughout the country defending class action and opt-out cases brought against a major international pharmaceutical company. She also has defended claims based on California Business and Professions Code Section 17200 and the California Consumer Legal Remedies Act for clients in the food, computer, and technology industries, defeating several of those claims at the pleading stage.

Debra's representative experience includes:

- Defending Chevron U.S.A. Inc. and Chevron Corp., in connection with claims filed by the City of Richmond related to a 2012 refinery fire in Richmond, California. She was a key player in the

expert discovery, drawing on her skill in selecting, developing, and presenting expert testimony. After expert discovery and successful pre-trial motions eliminated most of the City's claims and damage theories, the case settled for a nominal amount.

- Representing several manufacturers and distributors in claims brought pursuant to California's Proposition 65. Her clients hail from a wide variety of industries, including beauty supplies, cosmetics, food products, and automobile accessories.
- Obtaining a rare summary judgment victory in the Los Angeles County Superior Court for a food manufacturer, defeating claims based on allegations of consumer confusion and deception.

Class Actions

Throughout her career, Debra has successfully handled class action matters, including matters in the state and federal courts.

Debra's representative class action experience includes:

- Representing a major telecommunications company in defending a putative class action involving claims of text message "cramming." Her client was dismissed from the litigation without payment to the class.
- Representing clients in developing complex settlement structures for resolution of multi-party and class action claims. In years-long litigation involving a prescription medication, she not only tried several cases, but played a pivotal part in devising a settlement scheme for the efficient and effective resolution of tens of thousands of claims.
- Securing victories for clients in the computer industry, defeating claims in putative class actions prior to class certification.

Boards, Memberships & Certifications

Debra serves as Chair of the Board of the Library Foundation of Los Angeles (LFLA). She previously served as LFLA's Governance Committee Chair and a member of the Board's Executive Committee. She is a past chair of the Litigation Section of the Los Angeles County Bar Association and also served on the board of governors of the Association of Business Trial Lawyers.

At ArentFox Schiff, Debra has served on the firm's Professional Conduct Committee, the Associate Evaluation Committee, and chaired the Women's Initiative for ArentFox Schiff's Los Angeles office.

Debra is a member of the California Society of Healthcare Attorneys, the American Health Lawyers Association, and California Association of Medical Staff Services.

Publications, Presentations & Recognitions

Publications

Debra regularly contributes to ArentFox Schiff's Health Care Counsel blog.

"Navigating California Evidence Code Section 1157's Complexities in Hospital Litigation," *California Health Law News*, Vol. XXIX, Issue 3, Summer 2025.

Presentations

Debra's recent presentations include:

- "Emerging Medical Staff Trends," California Society for Healthcare Attorneys' (CSHA) 2025 Annual Meeting & Spring Seminar, Apr. 2025.
- "Evidence Code Section 1157 & Peer Review Information Sharing Agreements" and "Agreements All Medical Staff Professionals Should Understand," California Association Medical Staff Services (CAMSS) Long Beach Chapter Annual Education Conference, Nov. 2024.
- "Physicians & Social Media: Navigating the Legal Risks," CAMSS Long Beach Chapter Annual Education Conference, Oct. 2023.
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"Working With Your Lawyers to Avoid Lawsuits: Strategies for Medical Staffs and Hospitals," CAMSS San Diego Chapter Meeting, Jan. 2022.

- "Investigation Hydra: What Happens When One Investigation Becomes Many," California Society for Healthcare Attorneys (CSHA) Webinar, May 2021.
- "Whistleblower Lawsuits & Interminable Hearings: Protecting Peer Review in an Increasingly Litigious State," CAMSS 2020 Education Series, Online, Jul. 2020.
- *Rescheduled due to COVID-19:* "Anti-SLAPP in Peer Review: The Evolution Continues," CSHA Spring Conference, Apr. 2020.
- "The Corrective Action Tool Box: What Options Do You Have?," Medical Staff Leaders and the Law Conference, Costa Mesa and San Francisco, Feb. and Mar. 2020.
- CAMSS Long Beach Chapter 21st Annual Education Conference, Oct. 2019 (Torrance, CA).
- "Teaming With Your Lawyers to Avoid Lawsuits: Strategies for Medical Staffs and Hospitals," Medical Staff Leaders and the Law 2019: Costa Mesa and San Francisco, Feb. and Mar. 2019.
- CAMSS Long Beach Chapter 20th Annual Education Conference, Oct. 2018 (Torrance, CA).
- "Whistleblower Lawsuits and Peer Review," Medical Staff Leaders and the Law 2018: Costa Mesa and San Francisco, Feb. and Mar. 2018.

Debra has served as a panelist during *Daily Journal*'s annual "Women Leadership in Law" conference, bringing together successful women trial lawyers serving as first chairs at significant trials.

Recognitions

Debra has repeatedly been named as one of the "Top Health Care Lawyers" and "Top Women Lawyers" in California by *Daily Journal* as a result of her in-depth knowledge of the health care sector and her impressive track record of success.

She has been recognized by *Chambers USA* and *Legal 500* and was listed as a *Lawdragon Magazine* "Top 500 Leading Litigation Lawyers." She is also a Senior Fellow, Litigation Counsel of America, has been named as a "Super Lawyer" by *Los Angeles Magazine* every year since 2004, and is rated "AV Preeminent" by *Martindale Hubbell*.

Life Beyond the Law

Debra enjoys travel and spending time with family and friends, particularly her two daughters and sons-in-law and their families.

Bar Admissions

California

Court Admissions

US Court of Appeals, Federal Circuit
US Court of Appeals, 9th Circuit
US Court of Federal Claims
US Tax Court
US District Court, Northern District of California
US District Court, Central District of California
US District Court, Eastern District of California
US District Court, Southern District of California
US District Court, Northern District of Illinois
US District Court, Central District of Illinois
US District Court, Southern District of Illinois