

# LEADERSHIP PROFILES

## LITIGATION

### GIRARDI | KEESE



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—THOMAS GIRARDI

“The cases we have absolutely matter”, states Thomas Girardi, a founding partner of Girardi & Keese, a plaintiff’s personal injury firm that stands up for those individuals that have been wronged through negligence or corporate wrongdoing. At the forefront of the battles against powerful companies such as the makers of the drugs Vioxx and Fen-phen, the firm is most famously known for its work in the class action suit that found Pacific Gas & Electric responsible for contaminating drinking water with the carcinogen hexavalent chromium, the case that found notoriety in the movie *Erin Brockovich*, and identical to another case being levied against PG& E this year. Having recovered over \$3 billion for their clients, the firm’s distinguished leagues include the President Elect of the Los Angeles Trial Lawyers Association, a member of the Board of Governors of the State Bar, and ten members of the American Board of Trial Advocates. Mr. Girardi is the immediate past-President of the 500-member International Academy of Trial Lawyers and the past-National President of the American Board of Trial Advocates.

Established in 1965, Girardi & Keese has seen the focus of the practice gradually change along with the culture, as cases that formerly arose from negligence have taken on a more moral component. It’s these instances that remind the firm that their job is not just to procure monetary compensation and dole out slaps on the wrist, but to remind companies that their poor decisions have dire consequences. “The government does little to protect the people. It’s up to the plaintiff lawyers. We’re the only message that any of the corporate America understands, and this is the message—You’re going to have

#### FIRM FACT:

*The Los Angeles Daily Journal nicknamed Thomas Girardi “The Billion Dollar Gentleman” after he obtained more than \$1 billion in verdicts and settlements over a two-year period.*

to pay for cutting corners, not designing proper cars, not properly testing drugs, hiding documents with respect to your share price,” says Mr. Girardi.

Fortunately, the great pleasure of the practice comes from the certainty of doing the right thing, a sense that rests in the consciousness of each member of the firm as they find themselves leading the fight against massive pharmaceutical companies and automobile manufacturers. Though proud of their role in righting the wrongs that have been committed, the attorneys at Girardi & Keese know their line of work is not for the faint of heart. “The pressure to succeed is enormous because you represent real people, and the cases are of serious importance—the little boy who will never be able to walk, the widow with three little children, the devastation of losing a liver to pharmaceutical drugs. You’ve got to win these things,” says Mr. Girardi.

One can attribute the longevity of each attorney’s tenure with the firm (many are in the decades) to the obvious value of the work being done. It’s hard not to see a clear cut line between good and evil when representing those who have such catastrophic consequences due to such obvious negligence, and every member of Girardi & Keese, from the assistants to the partners, is keenly aware of who and how they’ve helped with their successful work.



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