



OCTLA President

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AITKEN CAMPBELL HEIKAUS WEAVER, LLP

Journal of Consumer Attorneys Associations for Southern California  
**ADVOCATE**

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## Top Gun Award for PI Lawyer of the Year goes to Eric Traut

MEDICAL MALPRACTICE – DAN HODES; EMPLOYMENT – BIJAN DARVISH; DISTINGUISHED ACHIEVEMENT APPELLATE LAW – JEFFREY EHRLICH; YOUNG GUN AWARD – MICHAEL JEANDRON

It's that time of year again! Fall is upon us, which means OCTLA is one month away from the annual Top Gun Awards Gala and Silent Auction benefiting CASA OC. The event is being held at the City National Grove of Anaheim on November 11, 2023. Tickets are going fast, so purchase yours while you still can. CASA OC works tirelessly to assist Orange County children and teenagers through the most difficult time in their lives by training and providing advocates for youth in foster care. Please donate auction items to OCTLA as soon as possible for this worthy charity. This year we have made it even easier. Head over to [OCTLA.org/charity](https://OCTLA.org/charity). On this page you will find a link to the Amazon Wish List that will direct you to a plethora of items to purchase and donate directly to OCTLA, as well as a preferred wine and spirits list for our Wine Pull.

After much research and deliberation the OCTLA Board has awarded five Top Gun Awards to deserving trial lawyers who advocate tirelessly for their clients in and out of the courtroom.

I want to personally acknowledge the 2023 OCTLA Top Gun Trial Lawyers of the Year.



Traut

### Eric Traut

The Personal Injury Trial Lawyer of the Year is being awarded to Eric Traut for his Orange County verdict *Kozy v. County of Orange*. Eric represented a 47-year-old woman who was rear ended by an

Orange County Sheriff's Deputy. The impact caused her to need multiple epidural injections and disc replacement surgery. Unfortunately, the Plaintiff suffered complications following the surgery, which required even more surgery. Following a six-day jury trial, Ms. Kozy was awarded \$5,235,055.

### Dan Hodes

The Medical Malpractice Trial Lawyer of the Year for 2023 is none other than Dan Hodes. Mr. Hodes is receiving the award this year for his outstanding work in the case of *Andreef v. Kaiser*. Mr. Andreef underwent elective surgery at a Kaiser hospital. Unfortunately, he suffered a stroke that left him a hemiplegic, needing 24-hour attendant care. His medical history included multiple kidney problems. Mr. Hodes argued that Mr. Andreef was suffering from an acute kidney injury superimposed upon chronic kidney disease, as revealed by increasing elevated creatinine levels. As such, his kidney condition should have been optimized prior to his elective surgery. Because this was not done, Mr. Andreef was taken into surgery with unnecessary increased risk of further kidney injury and dialysis, both of which occurred. Because the stroke was related to the surgery, if he had not had the surgery, the stroke would not have happened. Following a 10-day arbitration, Mr. Andreef was awarded \$11,832,831.

### Bijan Darvish

The 2023 Employment Law Trial Lawyer of the Year is Bijan Darvish for his Orange County trial, *Glenda Mendoza v. County of Orange*. Ms. Mendoza worked for the Orange County public defender's office as an investigative assistant for over a decade. Ms. Mendoza's male supervisor, Jaime Barba, sent a sexually explicit text message to her. Ms. Mendoza was offended and did not respond, and Barba called her and claimed the message was for his friend. Barba then began retaliating against Ms. Mendoza and claiming she was incompetent. Ms. Mendoza eventually reported Barba to Human Resources and a sham internal investigation was conducted. Ms. Mendoza later resigned from her job after Public Defender Sharon Petrosino sent an email to numerous supervisors

and claimed Ms. Mendoza was not a trustworthy reporter of the incident. After a 9-day trial, the jury issued a verdict in favor of Ms. Mendoza for \$1,237,854.

### Jeffrey Ehrlich

This year OCTLA is giving a Distinguished Achievement Award to attorney Jeff Ehrlich. Jeff is being honored with the Distinguished Achievement Award for his decades of appellate success and ongoing fight for justice. In 2023, Jeff argued *Tansavatdi v. City of Rancho Palos Verde* before the California Supreme Court, securing the ability of plaintiffs to pursue a failure-to-warn claim even if a government entity is immune for the design of a dangerous condition under Government Code § 830.6. Jeff has handled several appeals vital to consumers including briefing and arguing *Pebbley v. Santa Clara Organics, LLC*. He was also successful in convincing the Supreme Court to deny review in *Pebbley*, notwithstanding the insurance industry filing roughly 20 amicus letters urging that it be depublished or reviewed.

### Michael Jeandron

And finally, the 2023 OCTLA Young Gun is being awarded to Michael Jeandron. Michael received his law license in 2014, and was admitted into the American Board of Trial Advocates (ABOTA) only nine years later in 2023. Michael is being awarded the Young Gun Award because he has demonstrated not only a willingness and desire to try cases to verdict, but also great skill and advocacy in the courtroom. Notably, he has obtained 13 jury verdicts in his first nine years of practice including a \$1.3 million dollar verdict in July 2022 and a \$5.3 million dollar verdict in October 2022.

Please join me on November 11, 2023 to celebrate these amazing legal accomplishments!