

A Week in Legal London 2026 Educational Programme

A Week
in Legal
London

LITIGATION

CALIFORNIA
LAWYERS
ASSOCIATION

Sunday, April 19, 2026

4:30 pm – 6:30 pm

Welcome Reception and Program Orientation
May Fair Hotel Private Dining Room

Monday, April 20, 2026

9:30 am – 10:00 am

Welcome from Baroness Sue Carr of Walton-on-the-Hill
Lady Chief Justice of England and Wales
Royal Courts of Justice



Lady Chief Justice, The Right Honourable Baroness Sue Carr was called to the Bar by the Inner Temple in 1987. As a barrister she specialized in general commercial law and took silk in 2003.

Her judicial career began in 2009 in crime, when she became a Recorder. She was appointed to the High Court, Queen's Bench Division in 2013, and became the second female High Court Judge to sit in the Commercial Court and the first female High Court Judge to sit in the Technology and Construction Court in 2014.

She undertook pupillage at Brick Court Chambers and 2 Crown Office Row, now Four New Square, where she became a tenant in 1988. She was called to the New South Wales Bar in 1989, following a Pegasus scholarship in Sydney. She developed a broad commercial practice and became a trained arbitrator and mediator. Her practice at the Bar focused on commercial professional liability, insurance and fraud litigation and arbitration.

She was elevated to the Court of Appeal in 2020. She was appointed as the Senior Judicial Commissioner and Vice Chair of the Judicial Appointments Commission shortly thereafter.

She became Lady Chief Justice of England and Wales on 1 October 2023. As Lady Chief Justice, she is the President of the Courts of England and Wales and Head of the Judiciary of England and Wales. She is the 98th person to hold this historic office and the first woman.

10:00 am – 10:45 am

MCLE Session:
One Heritage, Two Systems: UK and US Legal Procedure

Procedure is the operating system of the law. It determines who speaks first, what evidence is heard, how juries deliberate, and ultimately how justice is administered. Although the United States and the United Kingdom share a common-law heritage, their procedural systems have diverged significantly since 1776. This session begins with a text that once united both legal cultures: the 1773 fifth edition of Sir William Blackstone's Commentaries on the Laws of England. That work sat on the desks of six lawyers of the Middle Temple who later crossed the Atlantic and became signatories to the Declaration of Independence. From this common intellectual starting point, we will examine how two nations built distinct courtroom procedures, advocacy traditions, and judicial practices from the same common-law foundation. This framework will help participants understand the differences they will observe firsthand during courtroom proceedings throughout the week.

Presenter:

Leah Saffian, Attorney and Barrister

Chair, A Week in Legal London Committee



Leah Saffian is a California native and was admitted to practice in CA in 1985. She holds degrees from Amherst College (BA), Pepperdine Law School (JD) and Kings College (LLM). She was called to the Bar of England and Wales in 1991 at Gray's Inn.

While in London she worked as a California lawyer, a Barrister in employment and then was a Barrister/Tenant in chambers. During this time she prosecuted and defended complex fraud trials in several jurisdictions and defended in extradition. She appeared in UK courts from Magistrates to House of Lords. She presently practices in California dividing her time between San Diego and Los Angeles representing dual nationals in the US; US companies establishing foreign trade and offices; and advising/appearing as an expert opining on issues regarding US/UK legal issues and conflicts. Leah serves as the Chairwoman of the Week in Legal London steering committee.

Wednesday, April 22, 2026

9:00 am – 9:30 am

Welcome from Lord Robert John Reed

President of the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom

Supreme Court of the United Kingdom



Robert John Reed, Lord Reed of Allermuir took up appointment as President of the Supreme Court on 13 January 2020, succeeding Lady Hale of Richmond. Upon this appointment, Lord Reed became a life peer.

Prior to his appointment as President, Lord Reed previously served as Deputy President of the Supreme Court from 7 June 2018 and was originally appointed as a Justice on 6 February 2012.

He studied law at Edinburgh University and undertook doctoral research in law at the University of Oxford. He qualified as an advocate in Scotland and as a barrister in England. He practiced at the Scottish Bar in a wide range of civil cases and also prosecuted serious crime.

He served as a senior judge in Scotland for 13 years. From 2008 to 2012 a member of the Inner House of the Court of Session, and from 1998 to 2008 a member of the Outer House of the Court of Session, where he was the Principal Commercial Judge.

As well as sitting on the Supreme Court and the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, he is also a member of the panel of ad hoc judges of the European Court of Human Rights. Lord Reed is also the High Steward of Oxford University.

10:15 am – 11:45 am

MCLE Session:

When Mental Discord and Issues of Competency Meet the Law – Harmonizing Humanity and Justice

Experts from the UK and California will unpack the mental health legal framework in both countries, including key differences in the legal systems. [Judge Lise Buckingham](#) and [Dr. Joan Rutherford](#) will walk the participants through the process of assessing capacity, legal options and potential outcomes in the UK using a case study. California conservatorship specialist Kim McGhee will address California competency issues, including how the law treats those with mental health issues and the legal challenges and changes resulting from the controversial Brittany Spears case.

Presenters:

Judge Lise Buckingham, First Tier Tribunal Judge, Health, Education and Social Care Chamber

Dr. Joan Rutherford, Chief Medical Member, Mental Health Tribunal Service

Kim McGhee, Partner, The Estate Lawyers

Judge Lise Buckingham qualified as a barrister in 1992. Initially specialising in crime, she then moved to work as a senior manager for the Court Service, leading both professionally qualified lawyers and lay magistrates. In 2003 she moved to policy advising on national projects including the introduction of specialist domestic abuse courts and structural reform of the Court Service. In 2013 she was appointed as a fee paid judge in the Social Entitlement Chamber in 2013 hearing cases related to a wide range of welfare benefits. She was appointed as a full time Tribunal Judge in the Mental Health jurisdiction in 2021.



Dr. Joan Rutherford is an honorary consultant psychiatrist at South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust and Chief Medical Member of the Mental Health Tribunal Service. She is one of 25 women to be highlighted as part of [a special project](#) that celebrates the stories of 25 amazing women psychiatrists.



Kimberly McGhee has nearly two decades in the legal profession and is recognized as both a Certified Elder Law Attorney (CELA) and a Certified Specialist in Estate Planning, Trust & Probate Law. Her path began at California Western School of Law, graduating in 2005. Her practice encompasses the spectrum of elder and estate law: long-term planning, Medi-Cal and VA benefits, conservatorships, probate and trust litigation, and asset protection strategies.

6:00 pm – 7:30 pm

Transatlantic Moot and MCLE Session:

From Blueprints to Barristers: A Battle of London's Skyline

A dynamic Transatlantic Moot featuring two British high court justices, two American judges, two English barristers and two of our attendees, debating the following: A high-powered New York real estate developer with future political ambitions has purchased property and proposes to build a multi-storied (75 floors) luxury residential complex in the May Fair district of London. A group of neighbors calling themselves “Homeowners for Privacy” is challenging the development on the grounds that it will interfere with the privacy of their properties due to the height and location of the development. At issue is the application of the recent U.K. Supreme Court decision in *Fearn and Others vs. Trustees of the Tate Gallery*.

BENCH:

Lord Justice Peter Coulson
Mrs Justice Julia Dias
Justice Bonnie Lee Goldstein
Judge Richard Silver

REPRESENTATION:

Mr Guy Fethersonhaugh KC
Ms Elizabeth Fitzgerald
Mr Eric Anderson
Ms Ashlee Gustafson



Mark Hill KC, Master of Moots, The Honourable Society of the Inner Temple

Mark Hill KC has more than twenty years experience of common law practice advising and representing clients in a broad range of cases including personal injury, professional negligence, rating, costs, trusts of land, property disputes and village greens. Against this wide background, he has developed an expertise in the law of religious liberty and is recognized as the country's leading practitioner in ecclesiastical law.



Lord Justice Peter Coulson is an Appeal Court judge, educated at Lord Wandsworth College and University of Keele. He was called to the Bar at Gray's Inn and practiced at Keating Chambers. Originally appointed to the Construction and Technology Court in 2004, he was then appointed a judge of the High Court of Justice. In 2018, he was appointed to the Court of Appeal.



Mrs Justice Julia Dias became one of the judges of the Commercial Court in 2023. She is authorized to sit in the Administrative Court and other King's Bench matters, including crime. She read Law at Cambridge University and was called to the bar by the Inner Temple, practicing as a barrister at 7 King's Bench Walk, acting in a broad range of commercial disputes. She was appointed Queen's Counsel in 2008 and a Deputy High Court Judge in 2018, sitting in the Chancery Division, London Circuit Commercial Court and Commercial Court. In 2023 she was appointed to the King's Bench Division.



Justice Bonnie Lee Goldstein was elected to the 5th District Court of Appeals on November 3, 2020. Prior to her election to the 5th Court, she served as the Presiding Judge of the 44th Judicial District Court in Dallas County. Before practicing law, she earned her B.A. from Hood College, and a J.D. from The George Washington University, The National Law Center in 1990, and licensed in Texas the same year.



Judge Richard Silver (retired), is highly regarded for maintaining a balance between fairness and efficiency, gaining the respect of attorneys for his ability to get the heart of issues quickly. During his 25 years at the Superior Court Judge in Monterey County, California, and as a JAMS mediator, Judge Silver successfully negotiated or arbitrated hundreds of disputes. He earned both his B.S. and LL.B. degrees from the University of California, Berkeley.



Mr Guy Fethersonhaugh KC specializes in rent review work (co-authoring the principal text on the subject), development agreements, easements and restrictive covenants, and has recently appeared in the Supreme Court in leading cases on leasehold covenants and prescriptive claims. He studied at Bristol University and was called to the Bar at the Inner Temple in 1983. He was appointed Kings Counsel in 2003.



Ms Elizabeth Fitzgerald specializes in commercial property litigation and, in particular, disputes relating to development land, including matters concerning restrictive covenants and easements, overage disputes, option agreements, and collaboration and joint venture disputes. She studied at St. Edwards College, Liverpool and Kings College London. She was called to the Bar at the Inner Temple in 2001.



Mr Eric Anderson is Senior Counsel with Varner and Brandt and is a highly accomplished trial attorney with over twenty years of top-tier litigation experience. With a career marked by high-stakes advocacy, Mr. Anderson has tried more than 150 cases to verdict in criminal, civil, and business law cases. He earned his J.D. from Boston College Law School and is admitted to practice in both California and Massachusetts.



Ms Ashlee Gustafson is the lead partner for Walker & Reed's litigation practice. Ashlee's practice focuses on general civil litigation primarily in the areas of contract and business disputes, real estate litigation, construction law, employment disputes, and Landlord disputes. She received her B.A. from Penn State University in Crime, Law and Justice and earned her law degree from Thomas Jefferson School of Law. She practices in the Carmel-Monterey area of California.

Thursday, April 23, 2026

5:30 pm – 6:30 pm

MCLE Session:
Two Lawyers Walk Into a Bar

A panel discussion between California attorneys and UK barristers. This program will provide attendees the opportunity to learn from practitioners in the areas of criminal, media and family law as they compare the rules and procedures of practice between California and the UK.

UK Barristers:

Liz Andrews, 1GC
QEB Hollis Whiteman
Chris Zabilowicz, 5RB

California Lawyers:

Pamela Jones
Eric Anderson, Varner and Brandt
Leah Saffian

Friday, April 24, 2026

6:30 pm – 10:00 pm

Closing Dinner at the Palace of Westminster in the Peers' Dining Room of the House of Lords

Hosted by Guy Rhys John Mansfield, The Lord Sandhurst KC

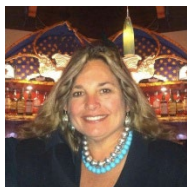


The Lord Sandhurst KC is a British barrister and member of the Conservative member of the House of Lords. He was Chair of the Bar Council of England and Wales in 2005 and has been a Master of the Bench of Middle Temple since 2000. Prior to his election to the House of Lords in 2021, he took Silk in 1994 and served as a Recorder of the Crown Court and as a Deputy High Court Judge. Lord Sandhurst was elected as a member of the House of Lords in 2021 in a Conservative hereditary peers' by-election.

STEERING COMMITTEE



Kristina Robledo is a Senior Section Manager at the California Lawyers Association, bringing over 20 years of combined experience with the State Bar of California and CLA. Since joining CLA in 2018, she has become a trusted leader known for her deep institutional knowledge and cross-functional expertise. Kristina began her career as an Administrative Assistant and steadily advanced through roles including Executive Senior Administrator and Section Coordinator, building a strong foundation in operations, customer service, and policy administration along the way. Today, she oversees key sections including Intellectual Property and Litigation, where she plays a critical role in supporting leadership, driving strategic initiatives, and ensuring seamless member experiences. Widely regarded as a go-to resource across the organization, Kristina is known for her collaborative spirit, problem-solving mindset, and unwavering support of her team.



Leah Saffian is a California native and was admitted to practice in CA in 1985. She holds degrees from Amherst College (BA), Pepperdine Law School (JD) and Kings College (LLM). She was called to the Bar of England and Wales in 1991 at Gray's Inn.

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George Wailes is a business trial attorney who has tried, arbitrated and resolved disputes involving trusts, trade secrets, corporate, real estate, employment, and ERISA issues. He serves as a mediator individually and for the federal court and San Francisco and San Mateo County Superior Courts. In addition to serving on the Legal London steering committee, George was a member of the inaugural Board of Representatives of the California Lawyers Association; is a past Chair and now advisor of the CLA Litigation Section Executive Committee. George also volunteers for and has led local bar associations and numerous community organizations.

GROUP LEADERS



Larry Biegel is one of the most skilled and respected trial attorneys in California. Over the years, he has successfully tried criminal cases involving major felonies including a death penalty case, civil actions involving complex business issues, and personal injury involving motorcycle accidents, auto accidents, and ATV cases with the support of investigators and expert witnesses. He is an inductee of the American Board of Trial Advocates (ABOTA) and has served as the President of the Monterey County Bar Association. In recognition of his outstanding jury trial skills, he received the Lewis L. Fenton Award in 2006. For the past three years, Larry has served as a member of the Executive Committee of the Litigation Section of CLA and as a representative of the Legal London programme on that body.



Mary McKelvey is a fierce and highly respected trial attorney who is influential in every aspect of her career, i.e. in litigating difficult cases for national and global clients, in successfully assuming leadership positions at the state and local bar levels, in creating strategies for resolution, in handling high stakes pro bono cases, in supporting the next generation of women lawyers, in mentoring at-risk non-lawyer women, and proactively influencing key issues in both the legal and larger community. In addition to serving on the Legal London steering committee, Mary serves on the California Lawyer's Association Executive Committee for the Litigation Section.



Pamela Jones is a family law specialist, certified by the State Bar of California Board of Legal Specialization. She was admitted to practice in CA in 1993. Her practice is dedicated to advising clients in the areas of divorce, legal separation, annulment, child custody, visitation, child and spousal support and property issues. Pamela has been an active participant of the Legal London program and steering committee since 2008.



Staci Osborn Based in Sacramento, California, Staci Osborn brings her legal expertise into the high school classroom to empower the next generation. As a law and legal studies teacher, she focuses on bridging the gap between complex legal theory and everyday citizenship, ensuring her students understand their rights and responsibilities. By utilizing immersive tools like mock trials, Staci fosters a classroom environment built on critical thinking and active participation in current events.

MOSAIC EVENT MANAGEMENT



Michelle McFadden is a seasoned meeting planner with more than 35 years of experience. She is responsible for all aspects of meeting coordination for Mosaic clients. From site selection to financial reconciliation, Michelle's expertise and attention to detail are truly invaluable. Prior to first joining Mosaic in 1996, Michelle worked as both an independent and in-house planner for Meetings Plus, the International Council of Shopping Centers, OPTS Events, and Informix, as well as owning her own small planning firm. Michelle is the mother of two grown daughters and is a graduate of Brigham Young University with a degree in Public Relations. This is Michelle's 11th Legal London program.



Sarah Koenig is an extrovert at heart. She has spent the past decade building her career in event planning, managing everything from international incentive trips and large-scale conferences to weddings. With a keen eye for detail, infectious enthusiasm, and a positive outlook, Sarah brings energy and expertise to every project. Outside of work, she loves both meticulously planned and spontaneous travel, any excuse to celebrate with friends, true crime podcasts, and soaking up the sun with a good book and a glass of champagne. Originally from the San Francisco Bay Area, Sarah now lives in San Diego with her husband and their two adopted puppies, Marjorie and Bud.