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Top White-Collar Lawyers 2024

Our annual list honoring the top performing attorneys specializing in white-collar law.



NICOLA T. HANNA

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For Nicola T. “Nick” Hanna, practicing law has always been about more than just winning cases.

Over his 35-year career, the Gibson Dunn litigation partner has moved seamlessly between public service and private practice, handling some of the nation’s most significant white-collar and corporate investigations.

Now co-chair of firm’s global white-collar defense and investigations practice group, Hanna draws on lessons

learned from his early mentor, the late Tom Holliday.

“Tom was a lawyer’s lawyer,” Hanna recalls. “He emphasized that practicing law required complete devotion to your client’s best interests.” But perhaps more importantly, Holliday instilled in Hanna an unwavering commitment to personal integrity. “Tom did many a deal on a handshake, because Tom’s word was gold.”

This foundation served Hanna well during his tenure as United States Attorney for the Central District of California from 2018 to 2021. Leading an office of more than 280 prosecutors, he oversaw landmark cases including the Los Angeles City Hall corruption scandal, the prosecution of Michael Avenatti and the prosecution of democratic donor Ed Buck. *United States v. Avenatti*, 19-cr-61 (C.D. Cal., filed Apr. 10, 2019); *United States v. Jose Luis Huizar*, 2:20-cr-00326-JFW, (C.D. Cal., filed July 30, 2020); *United States v. Buck*, 2:19-CR-00595-CAS-1 (C.D. Cal. Apr. 4, 2022).

Today, Hanna’s practice spans industries from cryptocurrency to medical devices, though some of his

most successful work happens quietly – criminal investigations that end in declination.

His recent high-profile cases include defending TikTok against state attorneys general allegations of youth harm and representing former FAT Brands CEO Andrew Wiederhorn in parallel DOJ and SEC investigations. *SEC v. Fat Brands, et al*, 2:24-cv-03913-MCS-SSCx, (C.D. Cal., filed May 10, 2024).

One notable case involved defending former CEO Sanjiv Taneja in a complex \$150 million fraud case involving tech giant Qualcomm. The case, which garnered national attention, resulted in a favorable plea deal in August 2023, *United States v. Arabi*, 22-cr-01152-BAS (S.D. Cal. May 24, 2022).

Looking at broader trends, Hanna notes a significant shift in the enforcement landscape.

“I am seeing a significant rise in the cases brought by State Attorneys General,” he observed. “Many of these cases involve consumer protection statutes and coordinated multi-state investigations, often with federal components.”