

Public Investors Advocate Bar Association (PIABA) MidYear Meeting 2025

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Stacy Puente, Attorney
Elkins Kalt, LLP
Los Angeles, California

Stacy Puente is Of Counsel at the Los Angeles law firm Elkins Kalt, LLP, where her practice includes broker-dealer/investment adviser regulatory counseling, litigation, and arbitration, as well as general commercial litigation. Prior to her current role, Stacy served as the second Ombuds of the Securities and Exchange Commission, in which capacity she primarily resolved public concerns, questions, and complaints about the SEC and the self-regulatory organizations subject to SEC oversight. Her near 10-year tenure at the SEC also included the drafting and implementation of several SEC rulemakings and the evaluation of FINRA rulemakings for compliance with the Securities Exchange Act. Stacy received her B.A. in English from the University of Texas at Austin, graduating *summa cum laude* with highest university honors. She received her J.D. from Stanford Law School.

Melanie Lubin, Attorney

Office of the Attorney General, Maryland Securities Division

Baltimore, MD

Melanie Senter Lubin serves as the Securities Commissioner in the Office of the Maryland Attorney General, served as president of the North American Securities Administrators Association, and currently is a member of NASAA's Board of Directors. Commissioner Lubin has held numerous NASAA leadership positions throughout her three decades as a state securities regulator and has represented the association in testimony before the US House Financial Services and US Senate Banking committees. She serves as the association's representative to the Financial Stability Oversight Council and chairs NASAA's CRD/IARD Steering and Federal Legislation Committees. In these and other roles, Commissioner Lubin has helped shape NASAA's approach to a broad range of regulatory issues important to America's capital markets and retail investors. A graduate of the University of Maryland, Ms. Lubin received her law degree from the University of Baltimore School of Law.

Bria Adams, Attorney
FINRA
Washington, DC

Bria Adams is an Assistant General Counsel in the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority's (FINRA) Office of General Counsel in Washington, D.C. Bria's responsibilities involve a focus on securities arbitration and mediation rulemakings and interpretive guidance, including both customer and industry disputes. Prior to joining FINRA, Bria was an associate at a law firm in Washington, D.C. for five years, where she counseled broker-dealers and investment advisers on federal and state laws and FINRA rules. Her financial industry experience also includes time working at a broker-dealer, where she held a variety of roles focused on providing service and guidance to retail investors and held the Series 6, 7 and 63 licenses. During law school, Bria interned with FINRA in the Department of Enforcement and with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) in the Office of the Investor Advocate. Bria received a B.A. in Sociology from The Ohio State University and a J.D. from Howard University School of Law.

Jeffrey Zaino, Esq.

Vice President of the Commercial Division of the American Arbitration Association

Jeffrey T. Zaino, Esq. is the Vice President of the Commercial Division of the American Arbitration Association in New York. He oversees administration of the large, complex commercial caseload, user outreach, and panel of commercial neutrals in New York. He joined the Association in 1990. Mr. Zaino is dedicated to promoting ADR methods and services. His professional affiliations include the American Bar Association, Connecticut Bar Association, District of Columbia Bar Association, New York State Bar Association (Dispute Resolution Section - Executive Committee Member and Chair of the Blog Committee and Blog Administrator for the Section), New York City Bar Association (Member of the Arbitration Committee and Affiliate Member of the ADR Committee), Board of Advisors of the Scheinman Institute on Conflict Resolution, New York Law School Advisory Committee, and Westchester County Bar Association. He has also written and published extensively on the topics of election reform and ADR and has appeared on CNN, MSNBC, and Bloomberg to discuss national election reform efforts and the Help America Vote Act.

Courtney Werning, Attorney

Meyer Wilson

Columbus, Ohio

Courtney Werning is a Principal at Meyer Wilson, based in Columbus, Ohio. She has dedicated her career to the representation of investors who find themselves in complex disputes with financial professionals, investment advisers, and brokerage firms. With a strong track record of success, Courtney's practice encompasses litigation in state and appellate courts, as well as various alternative dispute resolution forums. Courtney is on the PIABA Board of Directors and FINRA's National Arbitration and Mediation Committee.

Sander Ressler, Expert

Essential Edge Compliance Outsourcing Services, LLC

Sander J. Ressler has broad and deep expertise in financial services compliance and operations – including more than 30 years of hands-on, frontline experience with broker-dealers and registered investment advisers. His career spans compliance and supervisory roles – at broker-dealers owned by American Express, American General, AIG, ING and Société Générale S.A.

Through his firm, Edge Essential Regulatory and Legal Support Services, LLC, Sander has supported many PIABA attorneys during mediation and arbitration; he also has been engaged on numerous AWC undertakings. He oversees a national network of deeply experienced professionals who provide a wide range of outsourced compliance services through his consulting firm, Essential Edge Compliance Outsourcing Services, LLC. wealthmanagement.com recognized the outsourcing company as a Finalist for Best 2020 Initiative by a Law or Compliance Firm.

Sander has established himself as a thought leader on compliance and supervisory issues. He has been quoted in or authored numerous articles for publications such as InvestmentNews and Wealth Management, and serves as Expert Columnist, Compliance & Regulatory Affairs for Wealth Solutions Report. In 2024, Sander has spoken at the National Society of Compliance Professionals Compliance Lab, RegEd Engage, Orion Ascent conference and FSI OneVoice. In 2022-2023, Sander addressed the National Society of Compliance Professionals, Smarsh and RegEd Compliance Alliance conferences.

Sander began his career as a state regulator in Miami, where he has returned to guest lecture at the University of Miami Investment Rights Clinic.

He has held 10 securities registrations and obtained his Bachelor's in Investment Finance from Florida State University.

Michelle Atlas, Attorney

Vice President of Registered Investment Advisor Operations at AdvisorLaw Westminster, CO

Michelle Atlas-Quinn is an attorney and the Vice President of Registered Investment Advisor Operations at AdvisorLaw, in Westminster, Colorado. She is a seasoned legal professional with a deep understanding of the wealth management industry, both in the RIA space, and, the broker-dealer space.

Mrs. Atlas-Quinn is licensed to practice law in Colorado and previously held FINRA licenses Series 7, 63. She was also previously licensed in Colorado to sell health and life insurance.

Mrs. Atlas-Quinn has substantial experience in compliance, regulatory matters, and risk management and regularly counsels Registered Investment Advisors related to all such matters.

She holds a Juris Doctorate from the University of Denver Sturm College of Law and a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy from the University of Colorado.

Adam Weinstein, Attorney

Gana Weinstein LLP New York, New York

Adam Weinstein is a partner with the firm. Mr. Weinstein's practice focuses on all aspects of securities and commercial litigation. He has successfully represented hundreds of investors, business owners, and companies in litigation brought through arbitration, State, and Federal courts.

Mr. Weinstein brings a unique background and experience to the firm. Prior to practicing law, Mr. Weinstein worked for companies in the areas of business consulting, manufacturing and supply chain management, marketing, and insurance. Having studied the business methods and operations of companies large and small, Mr. Weinstein brings more than just an understanding of the legal issues presented to his work.

Mr. Weinstein was named in the New York Super Lawyers Rising Stars® in 2013 and has been published in the Westlaw Journal and PIABA Law Journal.

Erin Koepfel, Attorney

Managing Director of Government Relations and Public Policy at the Certified Financial Board of Standards Washington, DC

Erin Koepfel was named CFP Board's Managing Director, Government Relations and Public Policy Counsel in November 2023. In this role, she leads CFP Board's public policy positions before Congress, the executive branch of the federal government, state legislatures, and other state government offices.

Prior to this role, Erin was CFP Board’s Deputy General Counsel – Adjudication for more than five years, serving as lead counsel to the Disciplinary and Ethics Commission (DEC), which reviews and takes appropriate action with respect to alleged violations of the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct (Code and Standards)*. Erin oversaw critical projects such as implementing CFP Board’s new *Procedural Rules*, designed to make the adjudication process more efficient, and managing the adjudication of increased enforcement actions. In her role, Erin also worked with CFP Board’s Standards Resource Commission, developing comprehensive guidance resources that interpret and apply the *Code and Standards*.

Before joining CFP Board, Erin was a partner in the Washington, D.C. office of global law firm K&L Gates LLP, where she represented financial services firms and individuals in navigating complex regulatory and enforcement matters.

Erin earned her Juris Doctor from Cornell Law School, where she was a Note Editor of Cornell’s Journal of Law and Public Policy, and her Bachelor of Arts in political science and sociology from Ohio Wesleyan University, where she graduated *magna cum laude*.

Maureen Thompson

Former Vice President for Public Policy at the Certified Financial Board of Standards. Washington, DC

Maureen Thompson retired from full-time employment in June 2023 after a 40-year career in policy and advocacy in Washington, D.C. Thompson started her career working for a small consulting firm, where she spent five years helping clients develop and implement legislative and communication strategies at the state and federal level. Those skills were sharpened when she moved to serve as the Legislative Director for a trade association representing state government officials. In that capacity, Thompson not only worked with federal lawmakers to conceive and pass into law three major pieces of investor protection legislation, but also traveled to work on legislation in nearly a dozen state capitals.

In 1990, Thompson and a business partner established The Hastings Group LLC, a strategic communications consulting firm that handled a wide range of Hill, coalition management, investor education, public relations and web campaigns for a variety of issues and organizations. For nearly three decades, Thompson worked closely with a diverse set of organizations representing the interests of investors, consumers, older Americans, working families, at-risk communities and others. She played a key role in organizing and managing successful coalition efforts around legislative and regulatory issues related to consumer bankruptcy, student loans, mortgage foreclosures, financial reforms after the 2007 market failures, preserving Head Start, retirement security, and other similar issues. Clients of The Hastings Group included AARP, National Head Start Association, SEIU, National Association of Consumer Bankruptcy Attorneys, and many others.

Thompson spent the last seven years of her professional career as the vice president for public policy at the Certified Financial Planner Board of Standards. In that position, Thompson continued her work supporting legislative and regulatory initiatives that helped to ensure that savers and investors are treated fairly when seeking financial advice. In this role, Thompson continued her advocacy efforts at the state and federal levels.

Thompson is a 1981 Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, New York.

Michael Williams
The Williams Group
Washington, DC

The Williams Group is led by Michael Williams, who has more than two decades of experience in business advocacy and strategic communication as well as federal and state government service.

Prior to founding The Williams Group, Michael was a Managing Director of Credit Suisse in the Public Policy Americas division, based in Washington, D.C. He was responsible for maintaining and expanding the Bank's relationships with members and staff of the congressional tax-writing committees and other committees such as Financial Services, Banking and Foreign Relations. Michael was directly involved in the formulation and implementation of the Bank's legislative policies and strategies.

Michael joined Credit Suisse in February 2007 from The Bond Market Association/Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association's Washington, D.C. office, where he was Senior Vice President. In this capacity, he was responsible for representing the Association's views to various congressional committee and regulators. In addition, he oversaw the Association's close working relationships with state and local governments and their representative organizations.

Michael served as Special Assistant to the President and Staff Director for Legislative Affairs during the Clinton Administration, where he was a key member of the White House team responsible for developing and implementing the Administration's agenda on financial services, tax and international trade legislation. Michael also served as a Deputy Assistant for Congressional Affairs at the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative during the Clinton Administration. Michael has coordinated and participated in numerous election campaigns at the federal, state and local levels. He has also served as a congressional liaison for the National Democratic Convention for more than 14 years.

Michael holds a Bachelor degree in Sociology and Masters in Public Administration from the State University of New York at Albany. He also holds a Masters in Business Administration from the University of Maryland.

Hugh Berkson, Attorney
McCarthy, Lebit, Crystal & Liffman Co., LPA
Cleveland, Ohio

Hugh Berkson, a principal of McCarthy Lebit Crystal & Liffman Co., LPA in Cleveland, Ohio, and of counsel with Rosca Scarlato LLC, has been active representing investors for 25 years. He is currently serving as a public member of FINRA's National Arbitration and Mediation Committee. He served on PIABA's Board of Directors from 2011 through 2024 and was President twice during that tenure. He has moderated more mid-year and annual meeting panels than he can remember, and very much enjoys giving back to the organization that has given him so much through the years.

Aaron Israels, Attorney
Israels & Neuman, PLC
Grand Rapids, MI

Aaron Israels has represented hundreds of investors in investment fraud cases against securities broker-dealers, registered investment advisors, banks and trust companies. He has represented investors in FINRA, JAMS and AAA arbitration proceedings, and in state and federal court proceedings, in numerous states.

Aaron has been a PIABA member since 2013 and has served as the co-chair of at least 5 different PIABA committees. He is licensed to practice law in Colorado, Arizona, Michigan, and Illinois, and is admitted to practice before various federal districts around the country.

Jeffrey Erez, Attorney
Erez Law, PLLC
Miami, Florida

The founder of Erez Law, **Jeffrey Erez**, focuses exclusively on securities arbitration and litigation. Mr. Erez passionately believes in representing aggrieved investors and obtaining justice for his clients through litigation. As almost all investor disputes with brokerage firms are required to be arbitrated with FINRA, Mr. Erez's practice is almost entirely focused on representing investors in FINRA arbitrations nationally. Mr. Erez has worked on thousands of FINRA arbitrations and other securities cases as a lead attorney or in collaboration with other lawyers, obtaining over \$200 million in recoveries for investors.

Mr. Erez has tried in excess of 50 **FINRA arbitrations** proceedings through final hearing or to Award (verdict in arbitration). Mr. Erez is regarded as a preeminent trial lawyer who is known to dedicate the time, resources, and effort to prevail at trial.

In 2022, Mr. Erez obtained an award of \$3.8 million for clients against UBS for losses sustained in YES – its proprietary options overlay strategy. UBS made no offer to settle the case, and the clients' losses in YES were \$2 million. Mr. Erez was able to recover the benefit of the bargain damages or damages to compensate his clients for how YES was represented it would perform as well nearly \$1 million in attorney's fees. This was a very significant award as most investors in YES that had filed claims to recover losses had not succeeded at trial. In 2018, Mr. Erez obtained an award for **clients against UBS** for \$4.2 million for losses in Puerto Rico closed-end funds and bonds. Mr. Erez obtained an award for a client against UBS for \$2.5 million for losses in Puerto Rico closed-end funds in 2015. Mr. Erez litigated Puerto Rico bond cases for a decade and recovered more than \$100 million for investors.

In a complex international securities case, Mr. Erez obtained an award against Morgan Stanley for \$4.5 million in 2014. Mr. Erez obtained an award for \$3.1 million against Citigroup in 2013 in a **selling away case** where a Citigroup broker sold an unapproved real estate investment that failed. In 2013, Mr. Erez recovered \$831,000 for investors against RBC Capital related to losses in Lehman Bros. preferred stock. The award included \$250,000 in punitive damages and was the fourth time Mr. Erez recovered punitive damages for his clients. Mr. Erez obtained two 1-million-dollar verdicts in 2010. Representing a retired Air Force General, Mr. Erez obtained a verdict of over \$1.1 million against Morgan Keegan for fraud involving several closed-end funds. In the same year, Mr. Erez obtained another \$1 million verdict for a family business, also against Morgan Keegan for fraud in the sale of mutual funds largely comprised of complex subprime structured financial products was touted as stable fixed-income funds.

In addition to published awards of FINRA arbitration cases that went to final hearing or trial, Mr. Erez has successfully settled thousands of cases. Although the details of settlements are confidential, Mr. Erez has recovered over \$200 Million for his clients through settlements and awards. Mr. Erez brings all his decades of experience and trial experience to bear in negotiating the best possible terms for his clients. Mr. Erez graduated from McGill University in 1993 cum laude and received his law degree cum laude in 1996 from The University of Miami Law School.

Alan Rosca, Attorney
Rosca Scarlato LLC
Beachwood, Ohio

Alan Rosca primarily represents investors who suffered losses as a result of investment fraud or corporate misconduct. He is a founding principal of the Rosca Scarlato LLC law firm, a firm that represents investors, employees, and consumers in cases ranging from class actions to arbitrations. Mr. Rosca's practice is focused on complex financial and commercial matters, particularly in the areas of securities litigation, investment fraud, corporate governance, and ERISA. He often represents institutional and individual investors in disputes with financial industry members. He is a former adjunct professor of Securities Regulation at Cleveland-Marshall College of Law, Cleveland State University.

Alan received his Juris Doctor degree summa cum laude from Cleveland-Marshall College of Law in May 2008. While in law school he served as a Managing Editor of the Cleveland State Law Review, received the Dean's (full) scholarship for the entire Juris Doctor program, was on the Dean's List, and won the "Best Oralist" award in the Jessup Moot Court competition, Pacific Region. He passed the Ohio Bar exam in top 1%, with the highest grade in the state to the multi-state section.

He is licensed to practice law in Ohio and District of Columbia, as well as the United States Supreme Court, United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, 4th Circuit, 6th Circuit, 9th Circuit, the Northern and Southern Districts of Ohio federal district courts, and other federal courts. Alan works primarily in the firm's Cleveland, Ohio metro area office.

He is a member of the Public Investors Advocate Bar Association, and is a current co-chair and past chair of PIABA's Amicus Committee. He is also a member of the Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association, the District of Columbia Bar, and the Cleveland Diplomatic Corps.

He holds a Master of Business Administration degree from Baldwin-Wallace College, Ohio, and has worked in the financial industry as a financial analyst before law school.

Joseph Peiffer, Attorney
Peiffer Wolf Carr Kane Conway and Wise
New Orleans, Louisiana

Joseph is the immediate past President. During his term he has represented PIABA in congressional testimony before the House Education and Workforce Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor and Pensions. Joe has also presented testimony at the White House in support of the Department of Labor Retirement Security Rule.

Joe is the founding Partner of Peiffer Wolf Carr Kane Conway & Wise. Based in the firm's New Orleans office, Joe has a wide-ranging practice focusing on cases that change lives. His practice consists of representing families affected by IVF clinic malfeasance, representing individuals and institutions that have been harmed by investment banks and brokerage firms, prosecuting ERISA class actions, and representing victims of labor trafficking, unscrupulous drug companies and those who have suffered catastrophic injury.

In his financial services practice, Joe has represented hundreds of individual retirees against their brokers in FINRA arbitration. The highlights of this practice include representing 32 Exxon retirees in a 90-day FINRA arbitration against Securities America that resulted in a \$22 million verdict – one of the largest ever awarded by a FINRA arbitration panel. He has also represented hundreds of Xerox and Kodak retirees against their brokers resulting from the brokers' fraudulent advice to retire and subsequent unsuitable investments. He has represented hundreds of families in cases involving private placements and Ponzi schemes.

His financial services fraud practice included representing approximately 25 municipalities and hospitals around the country in cases involving their issuance of auction rate securities. He also has litigated several ERISA class actions against large financial services firms regarding their imprudent investments of retirement money and conflicts of interest.

Joe has an active practice representing those who have been harmed by pharmaceutical products. He is the co-author of a treatise published by Thompson West, *Litigating Business and Commercial Tort Cases*, which is updated yearly since 2011. Joe teaches and lectures extensively throughout the country. He created and/or taught law school classes ranging from *The Basics of Arbitration and Trial Advocacy* to *Storytelling and Advocacy*. He has spoken at many national conventions on a variety of topics, including prosecuting large and multi-client claims, brokers' deficient advice to retire, and voir dire and ERISA class actions and FINRA arbitration.

Joe is frequently quoted by national publications regarding FINRA arbitrations and mismanagement of retirement accounts. He has appeared in the *USA Today*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Associated Press*, *New York Times*, *New York Daily News*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Business Week*, *Investment News*, *Reuters*, and many other publications. He also has appeared on CNN.

Joe has received various awards and accolades. He was one of three Louisiana lawyers ranked by *Chambers USA* for securities litigation in 2011. He was named as one of the fifty *Leaders in Law* by *New Orleans City Business Magazine*. In 2014 Joe has been selected by his peers for inclusion in the 21st Edition of *The Best Lawyers in America* in the practice area of Commercial Litigation.

He twice served as the chairman of the Business Torts Section of the American Association for Justice. Joe graduated from Tulane School of Law, cum laude, in 1999. While at Tulane, he served on the *Tulane Law Review* and was involved with the Tulane Legal Assistance Program.

Prior to attending Tulane, he graduated from Bowling Green State University in 1996, with a major in communications. While at Bowling Green, he worked as the General Manager of the campus radio station and City Editor of the daily newspaper.

Joseph Wojciechowski, Attorney
Stoltmann Law Offices
Chicago, Illinois

Joseph Wojciechowski has been a licensed attorney since November 2009 and been with Stoltmann Law Offices since March 2005. Prior to Stoltmann Law Offices, He had a short stint as a paralegal with a Chicago securities defense firm. He is currently managing partner at Stoltmann Law Offices and am responsible for the day to day operations of the firm, docket, and case management. Personally, he handles all aspects of case management from potential client/case intake to trying the case. He has experience representing investors in every arbitration forum imaginable and in both state and federal court. He has been a member of PIABA since 2009 and is

currently serving on the Board of Directors. He is currently chair of the Legislative Committee and on the PIABA Policy committee.

Mike Salmanson, Attorney
Salmanson Goldshaw, PC
Philadelphia, PA

Mike Salmanson has nearly 40 years of experience representing employers and employees in employment-related matters and commercial litigation, including cases under the anti-discrimination statutes, ERISA, wage payment and collection statutes, the False Claims Act and other federal, state and local laws. He litigates cases from inception through trial, provides counseling, and negotiates employment contracts of all types and settlements of claims. He is a frequent lecturer on employment-related topics.

Mike is especially well-known in the fields of employment discrimination, ERISA and the False Claims Act. He has been named a "Super Lawyer" in the field of employment law every year and has been repeatedly named a "Best Lawyer in America." In August, 2016, Best Lawyers in America named him its "Lawyer of the Year" in the greater Philadelphia region in the area of Employment Law - Individuals. He served on the adjunct faculty at the University of Pennsylvania Law School from 1990-2010.

Mike received his J.D. from the University of Chicago in 1986, and his undergraduate degree from Princeton University, *cum laude*, in 1982.

An active member of the community, he currently served on the Narberth, Pennsylvania Borough Council. An accomplished musician, Mike co-wrote the book, music and lyrics for A House Divided, a full-length musical about the Lincoln White House. He directed its world premiere in May 2018 to audience and critical acclaim.

Robert Van De Veire, Attorney
Kurta Law
New York, New York

Robert Van De Veire concentrates his practice on securities litigation and arbitration. He represents a variety of clients in arbitration, as well as in state and federal courts across the country. Mr. Van De Veire has represented clients both domestically and abroad, including as far away as China, Europe, and Latin America. In addition to his work on behalf of investors, he also represents individuals who work in the securities and banking industries resolve employment disputes regarding unpaid compensation or discrimination.

Mr. Van De Veire received his B.A. in Economics with a concentration in Finance from Drew University and his J.D. from St. John's University School of Law. Earlier in his career, Mr. Van De Veire spent several years as a trial attorney in the acclaimed litigation group of McElroy, Deutsch, Mulvaney, & Carpenter, LLP, an AmLaw 200-ranked law firm where he represented large national and international corporations. He is a member of the state bars of New York and New Jersey, and admitted to practice before the Southern District of New York, Eastern District of New York, and Federal District of New Jersey.

In addition to being a longtime member of PIABA, Mr. Van De Veire was formerly the chairman of the New York County Lawyers' Association's Securities & Exchanges Committee and has been consistently ranked by SuperLawyers.

Mike Evans

Founder of VEGA Compliance Consulting

New York

Mike Evans, the founder of VEGA Compliance Consulting, is a qualified expert in compliance, controls, and supervision for banking, securities, and commodities. He is a dynamic entrepreneur, seasoned risk manager, and multi-national Chief Compliance Officer with a business-focus. He has an MBA in Finance and Management from NYU's Stern School of Business and a BA in Philosophy from Colgate University.

Mike's global experience in New York, Paris, and London has transformed the compliance, risk, and control infrastructure of commercial and investment banks, including Goldman Sachs through 9/11, Lehman Brothers during the Great Financial Crisis, and BNP Paribas through its \$8.9 billion penalty, guilty plea, and remediation work. Mike also has experience launching, trading, and winding down his own hedge fund before moving into consulting and expert witness work.

Mike served as an American Stock Exchange Regulator, passed eight FINRA exams, is an approved FINRA Arbitrator, and is a member of the Securities Experts Roundtable, among other prestigious groups.