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TOP 100 • 2020

LITIGATION

A. Barry Cappello

Cappello has won billions of dollars for plaintiffs during a 50-year career suing just about every industry sector and alleging some of the most egregious conduct imaginable.

At 78, with no plans to retire, Cappello is still taking on major corporations. Plains All American Pipeline, Southern California Edison, Boeing and several large banks are among his recent targets.

Cappello said he enjoys taking on complex litigation that has long-term impacts and intimidates corporations into doing more to maintain public safety.

Cappello first made a name for himself in complex civil litigation in the late 1960s when an oil spill soiled Santa Barbara County's pristine coastline. Cappello was city attorney at the time and sued Union Oil and Texaco.

Leveling the courtroom playing field has always given him a thrill, he said. Large corporations can afford to hire top flight attorneys and plaintiffs

should have excellent legal counsel too, he believes.

"At the end of the day it's ultimately one lawyer against another, and we get to go to trial in front of a jury," Cappello said. "I know those large firms who do tremendous litigation work, but I wasn't worried at all because I know these guys don't have the experience with trial as I do."

Cappello also took on the banking industry in the 1980s in one of the earliest lender liability cases, changing the way banks treat borrowers. Cappello said he began seeing events where banks seized properties, businesses and homes from borrowers.

"People would tell me their bank did egregious things with regard to their credit lines, and I thought, 'You know, this looks like fraud and breach of contract to me,'" Cappello said.

He and his partner, Leila Noel, are on the individual plaintiffs' executive committee made up of several firms suing Edison over a wildfire in 2017 in Ventura and Santa Barbara counties.



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SANTA BARBARA

SPECIALTY: CLASS ACTIONS,
MASS TORTS

Cappello and Noel are also the faces of the class action filed against Plains All American Pipeline by homeowners, oil and fish industry workers who claim they were affected by the 2015 Refugio Beach oil spill.

— Gina Kim