



James J. Brown, Esq.
Mediator

OVERVIEW:

For over three decades Mr. Brown has litigated hundreds of trust, probate, conservatorship, and guardianship disputes, including cases involving will and trust contests, breach of fiduciary duty and surcharge matters, financial elder abuse claims, and contested conservatorships and guardianships. In such cases, he has represented “all sides” of probate related disputes, including representation of private fiduciaries, charitable organizations, trust companies, trustees, executors, conservators, and beneficiaries. Mr. Brown’s litigation practice is complemented by serving as a court appointed attorney and Guardian ad Litem.

For the last 15 years, attorneys throughout California have asked Mr. Brown to mediate their contested probate cases, resulting in over 100 mediations. Mr. Brown brings his real-world litigation experience to every mediation and, when appropriate, he evaluates the legal realities of a case for the parties to enhance the chances of resolution. In addition to acting as a mediator, Mr. Brown serves as a judge pro tem in the Probate Division of the San Diego Superior Court, which has given him experience in handling court calendars and mandatory settlement conferences.

RATES:

- \$650 per hour
- \$450 non-refundable administrative fee per party

ADR SPECIALTIES:

- Will/Trust Contests
- Trust Interpretation and Construction
- Probate
- Conservatorship/Guardianship
- Mental Capacity
- Undue Influence
- Invalid Donative Transfers

- Elder Abuse
- Prosecution and Defense of Claims of Breach of Fiduciary Duty and Surcharge

LEGAL CAREER & PRIOR EXPERIENCE:

- Goodwin Brown Gross & Lovelace LLP (2011 - current)
 - Managing Partner
- Wingert Grebing Brubaker & Goodwin LLP (1991 - 2010)

EDUCATION:

- University of San Diego School of Law (1988 - 1991)
 - Juris Doctor, *Magna Cum Laude*, Conferred 1991 (San Diego, California)
- San Diego State University (1982 - 1987)
 - B.S. Criminal Justice Administration, Conferred 1987 (San Diego, California)
 - Graduated with Academic Distinction

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS & AFFILIATIONS:

- Fellow, American College of Trust and Estate Counsel (ACTEC)
 - California State Chair (2020 - March 2026)
 - Member, Fiduciary Litigation Committee (2013 - current)
- Former Member of the Executive Committee of Trust and Estate Section of the State Bar of California (now known as The California Lawyers Association Trust and Estates Section), including participation in the following:
 - Incapacity Sub-Committee
 - Litigation Sub-Committee
 - Ethics Sub-Committee
 - Chair and Editor- *California Trusts and Estates Quarterly*
- Judge *Pro Tem*, San Diego Superior Court, Probate Division (2012 - current)
- Admitted to practice before State Courts of California and the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California.
- Current Member of the San Diego County Bar Association
- Current Member of the San Diego County Bar Client Relations Committee
- Former Delegate for the Conference of Delegates, California State Bar Convention (1993-1995)

AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS:

- San Diego Super Lawyers (2013 - current)
- Best Lawyers in America (2013 - current)
- "Top Attorney" - Estate Planning, Probate and Trust San Diego Daily Transcript (2012)
- Martindale Hubbel, AV Preeminent rating

PUBLISHED CASES:

- *Ike v. Doolittle* (1998) 61 Cal. App.4th 51
- *Munn v. Briggs* (2010) 185 Cal.App.4th 578

PUBLICATIONS:

- "Out of State out of Mind? Not So for Conservators since Hume," *California Trusts and Estates Quarterly*, Vol. 13, Issue 1 (Spring 2007)

PROFFESIONAL PRESENTATIONS:

- Speaker, "Mom Always Liked You Best: Mediating Trust and Estate Issues," California State Bar Annual Meeting, September 12, 2014
- Speaker, "Planning for and Coping with Third Party Professional Services Disputes," North County Estate Planning Council of San Diego, April 7, 2015

- Speaker, “How to Navigate Litigation & Ethical Issue in Estate Planning,” San Diego County Bar Association, April 16, 2015
- Speaker, “The Great Debate: Ethics and Duties of CAAs and GALs,” Probate Attorneys of San Diego Court Appointed Training Seminar, December 6, 2019
- Speaker, “Case Studies in Breach of Fiduciary Duties,” Annual PFAC Educational Conference (2021)
- Speaker, “Providing Notice: A Trustee’s Duty that is Sometimes Less Than Clear,” Probate Attorneys of San Diego, July 19, 2023
- Speaker, “The Danger Zone: How to Survive Being Deposed as a Drafting Attorney or Trustee in a Trust Contest,” Hawaii Tax Institute, November 7, 2023
- Speaker, “The Role of the Guardian ad Litem,” Probate Attorneys of San Diego Court Appointed Annual Symposium, December 1, 2023
- Speaker, “California, Texas & Florida Probate Proceedings of Cross-Border Estates,” The University of San Diego School of Law- Chamberlain International Tax Institute, Merida, Mexico, February 19, 2024.
- Speaker, “Guardians of Legacy: Trust & Estate Experts Unleashing Wisdom & Resolving Battles,” 9th Annual USD School of Law - RJS Law Tax Institute, July 19, 2024
- Speaker, “Civility and Professionalism in the Practice of Law,” Probate Attorneys of San Diego, October 15, 2025

HOBBIES & INTERESTS:

In his spare time, Mr. Brown enjoys spending time with three dogs, golfing and rooting for the New York Yankees.

To schedule a mediation, please contact Veronica Montenegro at 619-238-2400 x259 or vmontenegro@westcoastresolution.com or email James at jbrown@westcoastresolution.com.