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Top Cannabis Lawyers 2022



Priya Sopori

GREENBERG GLUSKER FIELDS
CLAMAN & MACHTINGER LLP
LOS ANGELES



Priya Sopori is the founder and co-chair of the cannabis industry group at Greenberg Glusker Fields Claman & Machtinger LLP. Before joining the firm, she got a view of the field from the prosecutorial side as an

assistant U.S. attorney for the Central District.

"A lot of my cases then came out of the Los Angeles National Forest," she said. "With illegal grows there were armies of guards with stashes of weapons, making it an extremely dangerous illegal market, which remains that way."

At Greenberg, a senior partner had a friend with a problem involving the seizure by the California Highway Patrol of a large sum of money for specialized farm equipment for the extraction of cannabis oils. "They asked me to take a look, and I jumped on it," Sopori said. "We sued and got the money back, and that led to cannabis companies that wanted us as outside general counsel. We convinced our risk management committee there was room for a white-shoe law firm to provide this new industry with professional legal services."

Sopori laughed. "I like to say the practice grew like a weed, but I think my colleagues are tired of hearing that." She maintains a sense of humor about her work, titling the firm's podcast on the industry, "The Grass is Always Greenberg" and renaming it a "potcast."

Recent episodes highlight how changes in Proposition 65 will impact the cannabis industry and how legislation proposed in Sacramento, SB1362, could allow licensed cannabis companies in California to engage in interstate commerce despite marijuana's illegal status under federal law.

"I wanted to call it 'Splendor in the Grass,'" she said of the podcast.

Still, she's serious about the lawyering that goes into her practice. "While it's been fun, we believe we elevate an industry that has had a propensity toward carelessness that we do not abide," Sopori said. "Now, most of our clients are careful about following the rules. As a former federal prosecutor, I understand prosecutors' priorities, and I know they have no interest in going after properly licensed businesses."

That issue was exemplified in a case currently on appeal in which Sopori represents Purple Heart Compassion Inc. and its popular West Hollywood cannabis dispensary, Cookies Melrose, amid efforts by authorities to shut it down. Sopori successfully rebutted in the trial court claims of fraud on the dispensary's license application and is currently defending her win. *People of the State of California v. Purple Heart Compassion Inc.*, BR055210 (L.A. Super. Ct. App. Div., filed July 29, 2021).

Behind the case were hot-button social, political and legal issues in the dispensary's neighborhood, which Sopori said have quieted as she and her clients engaged with critics. "My clients and I understood their concerns. The city has a much better relationship with Cookies now."

— John Roemer