



Pierce O'Donnell

Partner

PODonnell@ggfirm.com

Ph. 310-201-7558

Pierce O'Donnell is one of the most influential and accomplished trial attorneys in the U.S., with groundbreaking success representing clients in closely watched matters across virtually every major industry and area of litigation. Pierce was lead counsel to Shelly Sterling on the litigation surrounding the \$2 billion sale of the Los Angeles Clippers to Steve Ballmer.

A graduate of Georgetown University and both Georgetown and Yale Law Schools, Pierce's legal career began with prestigious clerkships for U.S. Supreme Court Justice Byron R. White and Ninth Circuit Judge Shirley M. Hufstедler. This early experience set him on a path that would always combine his passions for trying cases in the courtroom and for writing provocative articles and books outside of his law practice.

A Decorated Litigator

Pierce was named one of the "100 Most Influential Lawyers in America" by *The National Law Journal*, as one of "California's Top Entertainment Lawyers" by the *Daily Journal*, and "MVP of the Year" by *Law360*. The *Los Angeles Business Journal* named him one of the [500 Most Influential People in Los Angeles](#) (2016, 2018). In 2014, the *Daily Journal* recognized Pierce as one of the "Top 100 Lawyers in California" and as a "Top Entertainment Lawyer in California." He is a member of the elite International Academy of Trial Lawyers, the American Law Institute, the American Board of Trial Lawyers, and the American Trial Lawyers Association. In addition, he is routinely named as one of the premier trial lawyers in his hometown of Los Angeles, California and in the U.S. by legal publications such as Super Lawyers, Best Lawyers in America, Chambers & Partners and the *Daily Journal*, and he has achieved the highest possible AV Rating from Martindale-Hubbell. *Forbes* called him the "new Perry Mason in Hollywood."

A Legendary Trial Lawyer

Over his 40-year legal career, Pierce has tried a long list of significant cases for major clients, such as the famed *Buchwald v. Paramount Pictures* case related to the movie "Coming to America," litigation on behalf of the victims of Hurricane Katrina, and the *Metro Goldwyn Mayer v. American Honda* case that recognized federal copyright protection for James Bond. In 2009, he led a team that secured the largest jury verdict in California (\$350 million), making him Trial Lawyer of the Year. In addition to dozens of trials across the country, Pierce has argued more than 25 cases in federal and state appellate courts, and handled more than 500 civil and white collar criminal

cases in 38 states. He has collected nearly \$5 billion for clients in a variety of cases ranging from antitrust to environmental cost recovery to business litigation.

A Renowned Author

Pierce is also the author of more than 200 articles and five books. His scholarly articles have covered important legal topics such as constitutional law, intellectual property, toxic torts and criminal justice reform, and have been published in respected journals such as American Bar Association Journal, Colorado Law Review and Georgetown Law Journal. Mr. O'Donnell has also published a number of highly acclaimed books and other creative works. He co-authored *Fatal Subtraction: How Hollywood Really Does Business*, a best-selling account of his role in the *Buchwald v. Paramount Pictures* case, co-authored the screenplay for the feature film "Home Team" starring Steve Guttenberg, and authored a critically-acclaimed book regarding a forgotten episode of World War II (*In Time of War: Hitler's Terrorist Attack on America*).

Professional Affiliations

- International Academy of Trial Lawyers
- American Board of Trial Advocates
- American Law Institute
- American Trial Lawyers Association
- Economic Roundtable of Los Angeles

Bar Admissions

- California

Education

- Yale Law School (LL.M.)
- Georgetown University (J.D.)
- Georgetown University (B.A.)

Trials

***Auerbach Acquisition Associates v. Daily* (Los Angeles County Superior Court; jury) (2009)**

Pierce served as lead trial counsel for the plaintiff in a tortious interference with contract lawsuit against defendant who misappropriated an investment opportunity in a credit card processing company. After a four-month trial, the jury returned a verdict of \$350,000,000 for plaintiff (\$300,000,000 in compensatory and \$50,000,000 in punitive damages). This was the largest jury verdict in California in 2009, and Pierce was named California Trial Lawyer of the Year.

***In re California Natural Case Pipeline Antitrust Litigation* (San Diego County Superior Court; jury) (2006)**

Pierce served as lead trial counsel for a class of 12.5 million California natural gas and electricity ratepayers and several municipalities in an antitrust action against El Paso Natural Gas, Sempra Energy, SoCal Gas, and San Diego Gas & Electric for rigging natural gas prices that caused the California Energy Crisis. Pierce secured a \$3.5 billion recovery in settlement after three months of trial—the largest ever class action consumer antitrust recovery.

***In re Katrina Canal Breaches Litigation* (Eastern District of Louisiana; judge) (2009)**

Pierce served as lead trial counsel for 300,000 Hurricane Katrina flood victims, State of Louisiana, City of New Orleans, and St. Bernard Parish in Federal Tort Claims Act lawsuit against the United States for the flooding of Greater New Orleans. After a month-long trial, the federal judge, in an historic ruling, found the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers “grossly negligent” in the design, maintenance, and operation of the MR-GO navigation channel which caused numerous levees to fail, resulting in the catastrophic flooding.

***Sterling v. Sterling* (Los Angeles County Superior Court; judge) (2014)**

Pierce led the Greenberg Glusker team representing Shelly Sterling whose husband Donald Sterling, a co-owner of the Los Angeles Clippers basketball team, was banned for life from the NBA and fined \$2.5 million for his racist comments on an audiotape released by his mistress V Stiviano. The NBA set in motion the process for seizing the team from the Sterlings (who were the team’s co-owners through their family trust) and selling the franchise at an auction. Battling both the NBA and Donald, Pierce and his team, representing Shelly as sole trustee of the family trust and after removing Donald as the other trustee, sold the Clippers to former Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer for the record-shattering price of \$2 billion—nearly four times the price ever paid for an NBA team. Pierce then led the Greenberg Glusker team representing Shelly in a trial in the Probate Court against Donald who opposed the sale. The court ruled in Shelly’s favor, finding that she had the legal authority to sell the team and instructed her to close the unprecedented sale.

***Sterling v. Stiviano* (Los Angeles County Superior Court; judge) (2015)**

Shelly Sterling sued her husband Donald’s notorious mistress, V Stiviano, to recover several million dollars of gifts and money that Donald had bestowed on his paramour (including a \$1.8 million house, two Bentleys, a Ferrari, Range Rover, clothing, jewelry, cash, and credit cards). Relying on *California Family Code Section 1100*, Pierce and his Greenberg Glusker team advanced the novel legal theory that Shelly could sue the recipient of the gifts (instead of merely suing her husband) because she had not consented in writing to these transfers of community property. After a trial, the court ruled in Shelly’s favor, ordering that title in the house be transferred to the community and Stiviano pay back over \$800,000.

***Dryer v. Labatt Brewing Co.* (Central District of California; jury) (1997)**

Pierce represented NFL Hall of Famer and TV/Movie star Fred Dryer in a lawsuit against a Canadian conglomerate (owner of Labatt’s beer and Toronto Blue Jays) for breach of contract and fraud for failing to make a movie in which he was slated to star. After a three-week trial, the jury returned a verdict of \$2.5 million for Pierce’s client.

***Contreras et al. v. Pfizer Inc.* (Los Angeles Country Superior Court; jury) (2004)**

Two wrongful death actions against manufacturer of anti-diabetes drug Rezulin which had admittedly caused liver failures, leading to death in some patients. Pierce defended Pfizer in a month-long jury trial, and he secured a total defense verdict against Thomas Girardi, one of the nations' leading plaintiffs' trial lawyers.

Barillas v. Pfizer Inc. (Orange County Superior Court; jury) (1992)

A woman sued the manufacturer of the Bjork-Shiley artificial heart valve, which had numerous reported cases of failure, leading to death. Plaintiff claimed extreme emotional distress over her fear that her valve (“a ticking time bomb”) would fail without warning. Pierce defended Pfizer in a two-month trial. While the jury was deliberating, this case and another 450 similar ones were settled on highly favorable terms for Pfizer. The jury reported that it had voted unanimously in favor of Pfizer.

Wakefield v. Pfizer Inc. (Tulsa County Oklahoma; jury) (2002)

A wrongful death action was filed Pfizer Inc. by the family of man who took the anti-diabetes drug Rezulin that admittedly had caused in some patients liver failure leading to death. Pierce was hired by the drug manufacturer three weeks before trial in a classic “damage control” situation. Plaintiff asked the jury to award \$60 million in compensatory damages and \$600 million in punitive damages. The jury awarded only \$1.55 in compensatory and \$10 million in punitive damages.

Buchwald v. Paramount Pictures (Los Angeles County Superior Court; judge) (1989-92)

Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Art Buchwald sued movie studio for breach of contract in misappropriating his treatment to make the mega-hit movie Coming to America starring Eddie Murphy. Paramount claimed that the movie was based on Eddie Murphy's original work. There were three separate trials in the landmark case, and Pierce won all three. The judge found that the movie was in fact based upon Buchwald's treatment; the studio's net profits accounting contract was unconscionable since a movie grossing over \$300 million did not generate any net profits for the profit participants and had a \$19 million deficit; and the court awarded Buchwald and his producer Alan Bernheim \$1 million in damages. Pierce and Los Angeles Times reporter Dennis McDougal co-authored a best-selling book about the case entitled Fatal Subtraction: The Inside Story of Buchwald v. Paramount (Doubleday 1992)

Flicker v. Arnold (Los Angeles County Superior Court; judge) (1980)

Pierce represented Danny Arnold, the co-creator, director, and producer of the hit TV series Barney Miller. Pierce obtained a defense verdict in a lawsuit brought by the other co-creator claiming that he had been defrauded in accountings for profits.

Hamilton v. Ford Motor Co. (District of Columbia District Court; jury) (1978)

Pierce represented the widow of husband killed in car accident. The jury returned a verdict for plaintiff of \$1,000,000—at the time (1978) the largest wrongful death jury verdict in the District of Columbia.

City of Newport Beach v. County of Orange (Orange County Superior Court; judge) (1982-86)

Pierce represented the City of Newport Beach in opposing the expansion of Orange County's John Wayne Airport due to noise pollution. Employing an innovative theory, Pierce filed a complaint alleging violation of the California

Environmental Quality Act due to the County's defective Environmental Impact Statement that failed to evaluate the tendency of airports to be used beyond their design capacity. After a lengthy trial, the court agreed and enjoined the airport's expansion. Two more trials ensued, both of which resulted in favorable verdicts against the County. Pierce also secured a federal court injunction and finding of contempt against the County Board of Supervisors. Eventually, the County scaled back the airport's expansion and agreed to strict controls on the number of flights and aircraft noise levels.

City of Anaheim v. County of Orange (Orange County Superior Court; judge) (1989)

Using the California Environmental Quality Act, Pierce represented City of Anaheim in a lawsuit to prevent the construction of a County jail in the city. After a trial, the court found that the Environmental Impact Statement was legally inadequate and enjoined the jail's construction.

U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission v. Rogers (Central District of California; judge) (1982)

Pierce defended alleged gold mine tax shelter promoter in an enforcement action by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. Pierce put on a defense that there were in fact operating gold mines in Panama and French Guiana. After trial, Judge Mariana Pfaelzer ruled against the government.

Lockheed Martin v. United States (Central District of California; judge) (2000)

Pierce represented aircraft manufacturer in a lawsuit against the United States alleging that the government was responsible for sharing \$500 million of costs of cleaning up polluted groundwater in Burbank. Employing CERCLA, Pierce secured a ruling that the government was an operator of Lockheed Martin's aircraft manufacturing plant and therefore a responsible party under the law. The government paid \$235 million to Lockheed Martin and agreed to be responsible for half of future remediation costs.

City of Los Angeles v. State of California (Los Angeles County Superior Court; judge) (1998)

Pierce represented the City of Los Angeles in a lawsuit under the California Environmental Quality Act to stop construction of a state prison in East Los Angeles. After a trial, the court found that the Environmental Impact Statement was legally inadequate and enjoined the prison's construction.

Permut v. New Line Cinema (Los Angeles County Superior Court; jury) (1996)

Pierce defended movie studio in lawsuit by producer for breaching contract to make the movie Dumb and Dumber starring Jim Carey. Pierce was hired two weeks before trial. After a four-week trial and during the fourth day of jury deliberations, the case settled favorably for Pierce's client.

Masiello v. Warden (District of Connecticut; judge) (1974)

Pierce represented federal prison inmate in a habeas corpus action alleging that he had been illegally denied parole because of guilt by association with his father "Gentleman Johnny" Masiello, a convicted Mafioso. After a trial, the federal judge ruled that Pierce's client's constitutional rights had been violated and ordered his release.

The foregoing is a list of representative trials. Pierce has also had more than a dozen other jury and judge trials in federal and state court, representing plaintiffs and defendants, in the intellectual property, entertainment, financial, real estate, environmental, technology, banking, white collar, and consumer rights sectors. His clients have included the Republic of France, State of California, NBC, MGM Studios, ConocoPhillips, Texaco, W.R. Grace, Reebok, Adidas, and AIG. Pierce has recovered over \$5 billion for clients in verdicts and settlements. *Variety* has hailed him as “The Billion Dollar Litigator.”

Pierce is one of the most respected and accomplished trial lawyers in the United States. His trial successes have been groundbreaking in numerous fields. Pierce has received numerous awards and honors over the 42 years of his distinguished career. A former law clerk for U.S. Supreme Court Justice Byron R. White, he has been named one of “The 100 Most Influential Lawyers in America” by the *National Law Journal*. For many years, he has been selected as one of the “Top 100 Lawyers in California” by the *Los Angeles Daily Journal*. Recently, he was named “MVP of the Year” by *Law360* and one of “California’s Top Entertainment Lawyers” by the *Los Angeles Daily Journal*. California’s Trial Lawyer of the Year in 2009, Pierce is an elected member of the elite International Academy of Trial Lawyers (only 500 members), the American Law Institute, American Board of Trial Advocates, and American Trial Lawyers Association. He has been recognized by such legal publications as Super Lawyers, Best Lawyers in America, and Chambers and Partners. *Forbes* called him “the new Perry Mason in Hollywood.”

Media

May 13, 2019

Cryptocurrency Investor Michael Terpin Wins \$75.8 Million Judgment in First-Ever SIM Swap Racketeering Case

February 12, 2019

Days' Numbered? Sony Trying To Kill Soap, Producer Says

Law360

February 11, 2019

'Days Of Our Lives' Producer Swats “Audacious” Sony TV With \$20M Lawsuit

Deadline Hollywood

August 15, 2018

26 Greenberg Glusker attorneys named to 2019 Best Lawyers® list

August 15, 2018

Cryptocurrency investor robbed via his cellphone account sues AT&T for \$224 million over loss

CNBC

July 27, 2018

Pierce O'Donnell named one of the 500 Most Influential People in Los Angeles

Los Angeles Business Journal

July 5, 2018

Producer claims he was excluded from Weinstein Company deal because of his race

Los Angeles Daily Journal

July 2, 2018

Weinstein Company Buyer Lantern Capital Hit With \$110M Fraud Suit By Producer Marvin Peart; Claims Race Was Why He Was Iced Out Of Deal

Deadline Hollywood

July 2, 2018

Weinstein Co Buyer Lantern Entertainment Accused of Racism, Fraud in \$110 Million Lawsuit

The Wrap

June 5, 2017

Bill Cosby Rape Trial Begins: Rivaling O.J. In Media Glare, Case Will See Accuser Testify

Deadline Hollywood

May 23, 2017

“High Crimes and Misdemeanors”: A Primer for President Trump

Huffpost

January 13, 2017

Amber Heard and Johnny Depp are finally DIVORCED, her lawyer reveals

Daily Mail

January 3, 2017

Call It a Comeback: The Rise, Fall and Rise Again of Attorney Pierce O'Donnell

Law 360

October 13, 2016

Art of the Comeback: Pierce O'Donnell and Jackson Pollock

Bloomberg Law

October 3, 2016

Brad Pitt Reportedly Intimidated by Angelina Jolie's Legal Dream Team

JD Journal

October 2, 2016

Angelina Jolie -- Adds Powerhouse Lawyers To Her Dream Team

TMZ

August 26, 2016

Redstone Granddaughter Drops Viacom Settlement Challenge

Law 360

August 26, 2016

Viacom settlement approved after deal reached to protect Sumner Redstone's granddaughter

Los Angeles Times

August 16, 2016

Amber Heard Drops Johnny Depp Restraining Order Request As Couple Settle Dispute

Deadline Hollywood

June 1, 2016

Redstone Civil War As Mogul's Granddaughter Promises Legal Action

Deadline Hollywood

April 27, 2016

Trial to determine former Viacom, CBS head Sumner Redstone's mental capacity will be open to the public

New York Daily News

March 16, 2016

Pierce O'Donnell 2016 CLAY Awards

Los Angeles Daily Journal

March 16, 2016

Hollywood Troubleshooter Pierce O'Donnell Honored as California Lawyer "Attorneys of the Year"

California Lawyer Magazine - Press Release

March 16, 2016

Hollywood Troubleshooter Pierce O'Donnell Honored as California Lawyer "Attorneys of the Year"

Greenberg Glusker Press Release

December 2, 2015

War Over Sumner Redstone: How His Ex's Lawsuit Sets Up a Trust Battle

The Hollywood Reporter

November 16, 2015

Donald Sterling Loses Appeal of Clippers Sale Court of Appeal Rejects Bid To Regain Team's Ownership

The California Court of Appeal

November 5, 2015

Donald Sterling & The Inside Story of the Sale of the LA Clippers

Thompson Reuters

July 27, 2015

NFL Gets Tougher off the Field as Players Cry Foul

Law 360

May 28, 2015

Greenberg Glusker named as California Powerhouse by Law360

Law 360

May 26, 2015

California Powerhouse: Greenberg Glusker

Law360

April 15, 2015

Greenberg Glusker Client Shelly Sterling Triumphs in Case Against V. Stiviano

Greenberg Glusker Press Release

April 14, 2015

Judge rules wife of former L.A. Clippers owner owed \$2.6 million

Associated Press

April 14, 2015

Pierce O'Donnell Handles Big Showbiz Cases and Battles for Epic Causes

Variety

April 14, 2015

Bonnie Eskenazi and Pierce O'Donnell Named to Variety's 2015 Legal Impact Report

Variety

January 20, 2015

Greenberg Glusker Receives M&A Advisor Turnaround Award for Sale of the Los Angeles Clippers

Business Wire

January 20, 2015

Greenberg Glusker Receives M&A Advisor Turnaround Award for Sale of the Los Angeles Clippers

Business Wire

December 9, 2014

How Should Ballmer's \$2 Billion Purchase Of Clippers Impact NBA Team Values?

Forbes

November 10, 2014

Trio of Greenberg Glusker Lawyers Named to Daily Journal's List of California's Top Entertainment Lawyers

Los Angeles Daily Journal

October 17, 2014

Judge mulls tossing lawsuit by Sterling mistress

Associated Press News

October 17, 2014

Ex-Clippers Owner's Wife Aims To End \$10M Defamation Suit

Law 360

August 17, 2014

Donald Sterling's appeal denied

ESPN

August 13, 2014

Sterling's last bid to halt L.A. Clippers sale blocked by court

Reuters

August 13, 2014

Clippers sale to Steve Ballmer goes from twisting saga to a reality

Los Angeles Daily News

August 12, 2014

Sterling Family Trust Completes \$2 Billion Sale of Los Angeles Clippers to Steve Ballmer

Greenberg Glusker Press Release

August 12, 2014

Ballmer Buys Clippers For \$2B Minutes After Judge OKs Sale

Law 360

August 12, 2014

Clippers sale to Ballmer is completed

The Deal Pipeline

July 28, 2014

Judge Approves \$2 Billion Sale of Los Angeles Clippers; Allows Sale to be Completed Regardless of Appeal

Business Wire

July 21, 2014

Clippers lawsuit: Donald Sterling meets with Steve Ballmer

ABC7

July 11, 2014

Donald Sterling's Wife Asks Court To Rule Him Mentally Unfit

Law 360

June 12, 2014

Trial will weigh if Sterling was properly ousted

Morning Journal

June 11, 2014

Fight over Clippers sale to center on Donald Sterling's mental state

Los Angeles Times

June 9, 2014

Plan B Eased Clippers Deal: Sterling's Diagnosis

The New York Times

June 7, 2014

Bidding for Clippers was 'like speed dating'

Los Angeles Times

June 4, 2014

Why Steve Ballmer's \$2 Billion Deal to Buy the L.A. Clippers Took Only a Week

The Hollywood Reporter

June 3, 2014

Quartet of firms handles \$2 Billion LA Clippers sale to former Microsoft CEO

Los Angeles Daily Journal

May 30, 2014

Greenberg Glusker Advises Shelly Sterling in Sale of Los Angeles Clippers to Steve Ballmer

Greenberg Glusker Press Release

May 26, 2014

Donald Sterling's Wife Approached by Bidders for the Clippers (Report)

The Hollywood Reporter

May 9, 2014

Statement by Clippers Co-Owner Shelly Sterling about the appointment of Richard Parsons as Interim Chief Executive Officer

Greenberg Glusker Press Release

March 28, 2014

Famed Litigator Pierce O'Donnell Joins Greenberg Glusker

Greenberg Glusker Press Release

Representative Experience

Business

- Serving as lead counsel to Shelly Sterling on the \$2 billion sale of the Los Angeles Clippers to Steve Ballmer
- Served as lead trial counsel in business tort case involving the theft of an investment opportunity in a credit card processing company, obtaining a \$350 million jury award that resulted in Mr. O'Donnell being named California Trial Lawyer of the Year in 2009

Energy

- From 2000 to 2008, served as lead trial counsel of a team of lawyers who obtained \$3.5 billion settlement from various energy companies in California Energy Crisis antitrust litigation

Entertainment

- In 1995, won the landmark case of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Inc. v. American Honda Motor Co., Inc., which recognized federal copyright protection of the fictional movie character James Bond
- In 1998, successfully represented Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Inc. in enjoining Sony Corp. from launching its own competing James Bond movie franchise
- In 2000, following securing a preliminary injunction and an appellate victory, obtained a \$21.5 million trademark infringement settlement for his client in a dispute with Walt Disney Company

Environmental

- Served as lead trial counsel for several hundred thousand victims of Hurricane Katrina – including individuals, the State of Louisiana, City of New Orleans, St. Bernard Parish, and major corporations and universities – in a landmark lawsuit against the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Successfully defended Lockheed Martin Corp. against 3,200 toxic tort claims in state and federal courts
- In a series of environmental cost recovery cases under CERCLA, won judgments or settlements for clients in excess of \$350 million, including \$230 million for Lockheed Martin against the U.S. government
- Engaged by the South Coast Air Quality Management District to prosecute a civil penalty action against BP Arco for 10 years of alleged pollution violations at its Torrance refinery, securing a record \$106 million settlement for an air pollution enforcement action
- Represented City of Los Angeles, City of Newport Beach, and City of Anaheim in blocking various developments (prisons, airport expansion, and jails) on environmental grounds

Intellectual Property

- Successfully represented celebrity stylist Vidal Sassoon against Procter & Gamble
- Successfully represented Ron Isley in an appeal that preserved his \$6.5 million copyright infringement verdict against Michael Bolton
- Successfully represented creators of James Bond, Survivor, Forrest Gump, Mighty Ducks, 42, and other works in securing compensation

Labor & Employment

- Served as counsel for Academy Award winner Faye Dunaway in her lawsuit against Andrew Lloyd Weber over her wrongful termination from the Los Angeles production of “Sunset Boulevard”
- Represented senior executives in entertainment industry in negotiating their employment and exit agreements

Products Liability

- Lead counsel for Firestone in the landmark “fear of cancer” case in 1993 (Potter v. Firestone Tire & Rubber)
- Lead trial counsel for Pfizer Inc., successfully defending 375 anxiety/emotional distress cases involving allegedly defective heart valves

- Lead trial counsel for Pfizer Inc. in three cases related to the drug Rezulin that led to the settlement of 4,500 claims