

PARTNER

Ruben Duran

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Ontario

Partner and member of the firm's Executive Committee, Ruben Duran represents exclusively public agencies in the Municipal Law and Open Government & Ethics practice groups of Best Best & Krieger LLP. He brings a comprehensive, interdisciplinary approach to the practice of public law. With an emphasis on open government and transparency and complex conflicts of interest issues, as well as elections law, land use and planning issues, Ruben also provides special counsel to many of the firm's clients.

He serves as city attorney for the cities of Ontario and Fontana and general counsel for the Oxnard Harbor District, which owns and operates the commercial Port of Hueneme in Ventura County, and the Crescent City Harbor District at the Oregon border. Ruben also serves as Board Counsel to the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), the nation's largest Metropolitan Planning Organization representing over 190 jurisdictions and nearly 19 million residents across six counties. As general counsel of these public entities, Ruben is responsible for all legal services, including advising the elected boards and staff at public meetings and day-to-day transactional and advisory services on issues such as public bidding and contracting, environmental laws and regulations, land use and planning, labor and employment matters, as well as oversight and management of litigation.

He has experience with public-private partnerships and is instrumental in assisting his public agency clients partner with large financial institutions and nonprofit organizations to finance and construct public projects. These include the use of New Markets Tax Credits for the development of shore-side power infrastructure and an intermodal transportation facility for the Oxnard Harbor District, where he serves as general counsel (completed 2015), and a state-of-the art health and wellness facility in the City of Desert Hot Springs, where he was city attorney (completed 2013).

CORE PRACTICES

Ports

Open Government & Ethics

Municipal Law

Special Districts

Airports

EDUCATION & ADMISSIONS

Education

UC College of the Law, San Francisco (formerly Hastings), J.D.

University of California, San Diego, B.A., political science

Bar Admissions

California

Ruben previously served as city attorney of Adelanto (2017-2018) and Desert Hot Springs (2006-2012) and general counsel of the Fontana Unified School District (2011-2012).

While attending the UC College of the Law, San Francisco (formerly Hastings), Ruben was a two-time national moot court champion in the Hispanic National Bar Association's moot court competition. Prior to attending law school, Ruben served a year as a Public Affairs Fellow in the prestigious Coro Fellowship Program in public affairs.

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A frequent speaker and presenter on ethics and open government, Ruben enjoys meeting and interacting with public officials and employees from throughout the State, sharing a common goal of efficient, effective and ethical public service. He was appointed to the California State Bar Board of Trustees in 2018 by Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon, and appointed chair of the Board in 2021 by the California Supreme Court. He is past president of the City Attorneys Association of Los Angeles County. Ruben serves on the boards of the Institute for Local Government, Coro Southern California and the Southeast Arts and Cultural Foundation.

Ruben is married with two adult sons. He enjoys reading, lifting weights and cooking. Ruben is admitted to the U.S. District Court for the Central and Northern districts of California and the Ninth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals.

Accolades

- The Best Lawyers in America®, Municipal Law, 2026
- California State Senate Resolution presented to Ruben Duran recognizing his leadership and serving two terms as Chair of the Board of Trustees for the California State Bar Association, Sept. 2023
- Brown, Mulligan, Rocha Distinguished Public Service Award, International Municipal Lawyers Association, 2022
- Latino Leaders Worth Watching, *Profiles in Diversity Journa*l, 2021
- JD Supra Readers' Choice Top Authors, 2020

Professional & Community Involvement

- California Judges Association, Judicial Fairness Coalition, Executive Committee, Member, 2023-present
- International Municipal Lawyers Association, California State Co-Chair, 2024-present

Thought Leadership

Publications

- "In Conversation with Ruben Duran & the Brown Act," *Fontana Unlocked*, Mar. 20, 2026
- "When It Comes to Deregulation of the Legal Industry, Divisions Run Deep," *ABA Journal,* Nov. 16, 2023
- "Turbocharging Growth Through New Markets Tax Credits," *Pacific Ports Magazine*, Volume 4, Issue 3, Oct. 2023
- "The Ethics Advisor: Fair Elections in California," *Southern California Latino Policy Center* (via *BBKnowledge*), Oct. 18, 2017
- "The Ethics Advisor: Cuidado with Decisions that Hit Too Close to Home (Literally)," *BBKnowledge*, June 15, 2017
- "The Ethics Advisor: The Details Matter — Recusing Yourself Due to Conflict of Interest," *Southern California Latino Policy Center Newsletter*, Sept. 14, 2016
- "The Ethics Advisor: 13 Things You Need to Know About Campaign Restrictions," *Southern California Latino Policy Center Newsletter,* Aug. 16, 2016
- "The Ethics Advisor: It's Getting Hot in Here," *SoCalLatinos*, July 13, 2016 (via *BBKnowledge*)
- "The Ethics Advisor: Vamos a la Playa!" *SoCalLatinos*, June 16, 2016 (via *BBKnowledge*)
- "The Ethics Advisor: Bad Stuff Sometimes Happens, Even to Good People," *Southern California Latino Policy Center Newsletter,* May 3, 2016
- "What does "One Person, One Vote" Mean?," *BBKnowledge*, Dec. 10, 2015

- "The Ethics Advisor: I've Just Been Elected (or Re-Elected) to Local Public Office — Now What?" *Southern California Latino Policy Center Newsletter*, Nov. 17, 2015
- "The Ethics Advisor: The Proper Roles of Staff and Elected Officials," *Southern California Latino Policy Center Newsletter*, Oct. 21, 2015
- "The Ethics Advisor: The California Public Official's Quick and Clean Guide to Gift Rules and Regulations" *SoCalLatinos*, Sept. 17, 2015 (via *BBKnowledge*)
- "The Ethics Advisor: Watch Out For Technology! The Ethical Use of Technology in Your Role as Public Official" *SoCalLatinos*, June 10, 2015 (via *BBKnowledge*)
- "The Ethics Advisor: Don't be Such a Crybaby!" *Southern California Latino Policy Center Newsletter*, May 6, 2015

Presentations

- "New Law and Election Update," League of California Cities, City Clerks New Law and Elections Seminar, Nov. 13, 2025
- "Funding Frenzy: Capital Allocation, Smart Grantmaking, & Regulatory Strategies," American Association of Port Authorities Annual Conference, Sept. 29, 2026
- "Who Does What and Why? A Master Class on Good Governance," California Special Districts Association Special District Leadership Academy, Apr. 22, 2025
- "The Ramifications of AB 98 on Local Cities," 2025 Southern California E-Commerce and Logistics Summit, April 17, 2025
- "Navigating the Intersection of AI and the Practice of Public Law," California Lawyers Association, Public Law Section Webinar, June 25, 2024
- "Raising the Bar: Putting the "Civil" Back in Civil Litigation," Los Angeles County Bar Association Annual Labor & Employment Law Symposium, March 28, 2024
- "From Stem to Stern: Proper Roles on Board your Agency's Ship," Association of Pacific Ports Winter Conference, Jan. 26, 2024
- "Best Practices for Board/Staff Roles & Communication," California Special Districts Association Webinar, Oct. 10, 2023
- "Financing Harbor Deepening and Widening Projects: Legal Developments on Existing Fee Authority," Association of Pacific Ports Winter Conference, Feb. 10, 2023
- "Understanding Board Members & District Liability Issues," California Special Districts Association Board Secretary Clerk Conference, Nov. 9, 2022
- "Understanding Board Members & District Liability," California Special Districts Association Board Secretary Clerk Conference, Oct. 27, 2021
- "AB 1234 Ethics Training," New Mayors and Councilmembers Academy, League of California Cities, Feb. 18, 2021
- "The Brown Act: The People's Business and the Right to Access," BB&K Workshop via Webinar, Jan. 16, 2020
- "Tips and Tools to Improve Trust in Local Government," League of California Cities Annual Conference and Expo, Oct. 17, 2019
- "Advancing the Policy Discussion Around Housing," BB&K Webinar Series: Innovating Livability for Communities, Aug. 8, 2019
- "Innovative Partnerships to Overcome Housing Challenges in Communities," BB&K Webinar Series: Innovating Livability for Communities, July 25, 2019
- "Focusing on the "US" in HoUSing: Merging Housing, Transportation, Incentives and Community," BB&K Webinar Series: Innovating Livability for Communities, July 11, 2019
- "AB 1234 Ethics Training," BB&K Webinar, June 6, 2019

- "Focusing on the “US” in Housing: Merging HoUSing, Transportation, Incentives and People," International Municipal Lawyers Association's Mid-Year Seminar WONK Breakfast, March 31, 2019
- "Ethics in Government," Ethics Training Seminar, San Benito County League of United Latin American Citizens, March 16, 2019
- “Ethically Navigating Local and State Licensing for Cannabis Businesses,” Continuing Education of the Bar Webinar, Dec. 7, 2018
- "How to Build and Maintain the Public's Trust: Practical Ethics and the Law," myLawCLE Webinar, Aug. 24, 2018
- "Understanding the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017," American Association of Port Authorities, April 18, 2018
- "Who Does What? Defining Proper Roles for Staff and Elected Officials," BB&K Municipal Law Webinar Series, Feb. 13, 2018
- "How to Build and Maintain the Public’s Trust: Practical Ethics and the Law (AB 1234 Training)," New Mayors & Council Members Academy, Jan. 19, 2018
- "Electrification of Ports: California as a Case Study” at the Association of Pacific Ports Winter Conference," Association of Pacific Ports Winter Conference, Jan. 12, 2018
- "Tips to Promote an Ethical and Transparent Culture," Institute for Local Government Webinar, Dec. 5, 2017
- "Required Ethics AB1234 Compliance Training," California Special Districts Association Webinar, Nov. 8, 2017
- "Trump’s Trillion Dollar Infrastructure Plan — What Local Governments and Their Lawyers Should be Doing to Ensure You Are Positioned to Maximize Your Community’s Participation," International Municipal Lawyers Association Mid-Year Seminar WONK Breakfast, April 23, 2017
- "NextGen Transportation Grants and Pilot Programs: Ridesharing and the Gateway to Automation," International Municipal Lawyers Association Mid-Year Seminar, April 23, 2017
- "Difficult Ethical Issues," City Attorneys’ Association of Los Angeles County Lunch Meeting, Feb. 23, 2017
- "Understanding Public Service Ethics Laws and Principles (AB 1234 Training)," League of California Cities’ Annual Conference, Oct. 5, 2016
- "Who Does What? Best Practices in Board/Staff Relations," California Special Districts Association Workshop, May 2, 2016
- "How to Build and Maintain the Public's Trust: Practical Ethics and the Law (AB 1234 Training)," League of California Cities' New Mayors Council Academy, Jan. 22, 2016
- "Who Does What? Best Practices in Board/Staff Relations," California Special Districts Association Webinar, Jan. 20, 2016
- "Everyday Ethics for Local Officials: AB 1234 Compliance," California Latino Leadership Institute's Veterans Leadership Academy and Elected Officials Training Academy 2.0, Oct. 9, 2015
- "Successfully Navigating Through the Statement of Economic Interest," League of California Cities' Annual Conference, Oct. 1, 2015
- "NMTC Case Study: the Port of Hueneme," Association of American Port Authorities Annual Conference, November 2014
- "Emerging Economic Development Trends: Best Practices for Municipal Finance," CSMFO 2014 Conference, February 2014
- "Williams Compliance in the Age of Tablets, Tweets and Technology Yet-to-be Tamed," California Association of Latino Superintendents and Administrators 12th Annual Summer Institute, July 2013
- "New Markets Tax Credits for Ports," Association of Pacific Ports Winter Conference, January 2013
- "Dealing with Common Board Member Conflict of Interest Issues," California Council of School Attorneys and the County Counsels’ Association Annual Conference, December 2012

- "AB 1234 Training," City of Bell, 2011
- "Advanced Ethics and Conflicts of Interest," City Clerks' Association Annual Conference, League of California Cities, 2011
- "Cold as I.C.E.: How Not to Get Burned by the National Immigration Debate on Your Campus," The Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents, 2011
- "AB 1234 Training," City of Downey, 2010
- "AB 1234 Training," City of Desert Hot Springs, 2009 and 2007