

LOS ANGELES

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## Top Women Litigators



Catherine Lhamon  
Los Angeles  
Public Counsel Law Center  
Practice Area: Public interest litigation  
Years in Practice: 14  
Law School: Yale Law School

Leaving the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California in 2009 was a bit frightening for Catherine Lhamon. She had been there for 10 years and was very happy with the public interest litigation opportunities she had in that time. But the experience prepared her to fill the Public Counsel Law Center's newly created position of director of impact litigation. Public Counsel has a large footprint in the community and she was hired to start a new practice, a "terrific" role in which she has a chance to help an even greater amount of people, she said. Her current focus is a class action constitutional challenge to state and school district practices that balance

budgets by cutting teachers from payroll. She is co-lead counsel on behalf of low-income children attending east and south Los Angeles schools. As she is gearing up for hearings on this case, she noted that for the first time in her career, someone requested to be added as a defendant - Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger. Lhamon said the administration and the Los Angeles Unified School District have been very active during discussions. Also, she is working on a case involving a class of autistic youth who were being served by Eastern Los Angeles Regional Center after the center claimed it had to discontinue services due to budget cuts.

Pretrial Ritual: "I read all of the cases and then I read them again. I try to think about what my judge would have wanted to know. Then I hope that I have anticipated everything the judge would have wanted to know."

Biggest Career Break: "I felt enormously fortunate to land at the ACLU when I did. The 10 years I worked there were absolutely magical. I'm enormously grateful for the training I received there."

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***Public Counsel's Catherine Lhamon is one of the 100 women honored by Daily Journal as the "Top Women Litigators in California."***

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