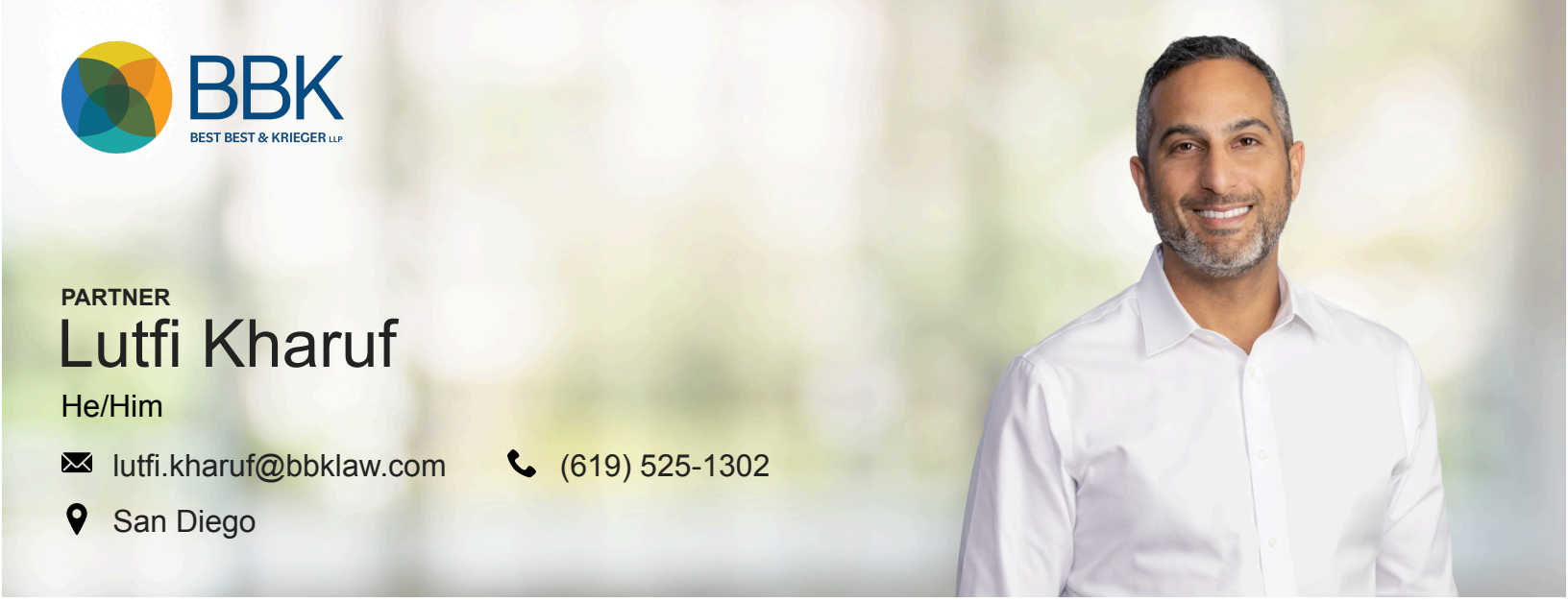

PARTNER

Lutfi Kharuf

He/Him

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San Diego

Lutfi Kharuf is a partner in Best Best & Krieger LLP's (BBK) Special Districts and Public Finance practice groups. He advises public agencies on the constitutional and statutory requirements governing fees, charges, assessments and taxes, with particular emphasis on Proposition 218 and Proposition 26. Lutfi assists agencies throughout California with adopting new and increased revenue measures, forming community facilities and assessment districts, and adopting or increasing taxes. Lutfi also defends public agencies in Proposition 218 and Proposition 26 litigation, employing creative strategies both in and out of the courtroom to achieve strong results. He also advises ports nationwide on financing harbor deepening and widening projects in compliance with federal and state law.

Lutfi holds leadership positions within BBK and several statewide organizations. He serves on the firm's Executive Committee and previously chaired its Recruiting Committee. He also chairs the League of California Cities' Municipal Finance Committee, where he helps shape policy and provide guidance to cities on municipal finance issues. In addition, Lutfi chairs the Association of California Water Agencies' (ACWA) Legal Affairs Committee and serves on ACWA's Board of Directors. Through these roles, he advocates for legislative and judicial outcomes on matters of statewide importance to protect public agency revenue.

Before joining BBK, Lutfi served as bond, disclosure and issuer's counsel to cities, special districts and other public agencies. He has extensive experience advising clients on the complex tax, securities and constitutional issues that arise in public finance transactions. Earlier in his career, he practiced in the corporate and finance group of an international law firm in Frankfurt, Germany.

Lutfi earned his law degree from the University of Southern California Gould School of Law, where he participated in the Hale Moot Court Honors Program. He subsequently earned a Master of Laws in Finance from Goethe University Frankfurt's Institute for Law and Finance.

Accolades

- *The Best Lawyers in America*®, Utilities Law, 2024–2026

CORE PRACTICES

Fees, Taxes & Assessments

Public Finance

Special Districts

Ports

EDUCATION & ADMISSIONS

Education

Goethe-Universitat Frankfurt am Main, Institute for Law and Finance, LL.M., finance

University of Southern California Gould School of Law, J.D.

University of Southern California, B.A., international relations, with a minor in law and public policy, magna cum laude

Bar Admissions

California

- *Lawdragon*, 500 X - The Next Generation, 2024-2025
- *San Diego Super Lawyers Rising Star*s, Government Finance, 2024
- *Lawyers of Color*, Annual Hot List, 2023
- *San Diego Super Lawyers Rising Stars,* Public Finance, 2021-2023
- *San Diego Business Journal,* 40 Next Top Business Leaders Under 40, 2021
- *SD Metro Magazine,* 40 Under 40, 2020
- *San Diego Daily Transcript*, Top 40 Under 40, 2019

Professional & Community Involvement

- Association of California Water Agencies, Board of Directors, 2026–2027
- Association of California Water Agencies, Legal Affairs Committee, Chair, 2026–2027
- Association of California Water Agencies, Legal Affairs Committee, Member, 2020–present
- League of California Cities, City Attorney's Department, Municipal Finance Committee, Chair
- San Diego County Bar Foundation Board of Directors, 2020–2023
- GO Campaign, Leadership Council, Vice Chair, 2016–2017

Thought Leadership

Publications

- "Governor Signs AB 2180, Clarifying Proposition 218 Cost-of-Service Requirements," *PublicCEO*, Oct. 14, 2026
- "SB 922 Confirms Local Authority to Recover Road Repair Costs Incurred in Providing Public Services," *PublicCEO*, Sept. 8, 2026
- "Section 53759 Means What it Says – Court of Appeal Once Again Enforces Validation Requirements for Proposition 218 Water-Rate Challenges," *PublicCEO*, Aug. 18, 2026
- “Court Rulings on Tiered Water Rates Leave Agencies Uncertain,” *San Diego Union-Tribune*, Quoted, Mar 13, 2026
- “Court of Appeal Limits Increases to Grandfathered Assessment,” *PublicCEO*, Sept. 18, 2025
- “Court of Appeal Limits Increases to Grandfathered Assessment,” California Special Districts Assocation *eNews Brief*, Sept. 17, 2025
- “Court of Appeal Upholds Traffic Impact Fee Post-Sheetz: Class-Based Development Fees Can Survive Takings Scrutiny,” *PublicCEO*, Aug. 15, 2025
- “The Price of Water Just Got More Complicated: San Diego’s Legal Battle Over Tiered Rates,” *BBK Legal Alert*, August 2025
- “Court of Appeal Upholds Traffic Impact Fee Post-Sheetz: Class-Based Development Fees Can Survive Takings Scrutiny,” *BBK Legal Alert*, August 2025
- “The Shifting Landscape of Water Rate Setting,” *BBK Legal Alert*, October 2024
- “California Supreme Court strikes wide-reaching tax reform initiative from November 2024 ballot,” *Daily Journal*, July 1, 2024

- “Ruling is Causing Uncertainty Over Local Special Taxes,” *Daily Journal*, Feb. 25, 2019
- “Ruling Leaves Local Public Agencies Open to Legal Actions Asserting Wasteful Government Spending by Non Property Owners,” *BBK Legal Alert*, July 20, 2017
- “Federal Securities Laws of Municipal Bonds Deskbook,” 6th Edition, contributor, National Association of Bond Lawyers, 2014

Presentations

- "Beyond the Water Bill: Building Financial Resiliency Through Fixed and Property Based Charges," Association of California Water Agencies, Fall Conference, Dec. 3, 2026
- "It's 2026, Have You Updated Your Impact Fee Program?," American Planning Association California Conference, Oct. 5, 2026
- "Funding Frenzy: Capital Allocation, Smart Grantmaking, & Regulatory Strategies," American Association of Port Authorities Annual Convention, Sept. 29, 2026
- "Proposition 218 in Practice: Emerging Trends, Legal Updates, and Real-World Solutions," California Special Districts Association Annual Conference, Aug. 25, 2026
- "Rate-ing the Future: Proposition 218, Mega-Projects, and Affordability," California Association of Sanitation Agencies, Law Symposium, May 28, 2026
- "Proposition 218 Today – Legal Landscape, Rate Resilience & Legislative Updates," Association of California Water Agencies, Spring Conference, May 6, 2026
- "Rate-Setting under Proposition 218: Legal Updates and Strategies for Success," California Special Districts Association Webinar, Apr. 28, 2026
- "Ethical Considerations - Elimination of Bias," The Seminar Group, Water Law in California Conference, March 5, 2026
- "Addressing Household Affordability and the Rising Cost of Water: A Policy Framework," Practising Law Institute Webinar, Feb. 19, 2026
- "Balancing Rates with Sustainable Infrastructure Investment," California Society of Municipal Finance Officers Annual Conference, Feb. 25, 2026
- "Water Meets the Tax Revolt: Constitutional Issues in Public Financing of Water-Related Services and Projects," California Lawyers Association Environmental Law Conference, Oct. 17, 2025
- “Practical and Legal Tools to Protect your Agency in Rate Setting,” Association of California Water Agencies Spring Conference, May 14, 2025
- “How to Conduct a Rate Study While Avoiding Common Pitfalls,” California Society of Municipal Finance Officers Annual Conference, Feb. 19, 2025
- “Moving the Ball Forward on a Water Low-Interest Rate Assistance Program,” Association of California Water Agencies Fall Conference, Dec. 4, 2024
- “Behind the Sheetz! - How the Supreme Court and State Laws are Affecting Impact Fees,” American Planning Association California Conference, Sept. 29, 2024
- “In Our Rate-Setting Era,” California Special Districts Association Annual Conference, Sept. 10, 2024
- “Current Trends and Challenges with Development Impact Fees (DIFs): Judicial and Legislative Changes and Practical Implications on DIFs,” California Society of Municipal Finance Officers Orange County Chapter Meeting, May 22, 2024
- “Water and Wastewater Rates Workshop: 101,” California Society of Municipal Finance Officers Annual Conference, Jan. 30, 2024
- “Proposition 218: Protecting Local Ratemaking Authority,” Association of California Water Agencies, Nov. 29, 2023

- “Public Finance 101: Opportunities and Considerations for Financing Infrastructure,” Spring Conference & Expo, Association of California Water Agencies, May 10, 2023
- “Financing Harbor Deepening and Widening Projects: Legal Developments on Existing Fee Authority,” Association of Pacific Ports Winter Conference, Feb. 10, 2023
- “Defending Rate Challenges,” Fall Conference and Exhibition, Association of California Water Agencies, Dec. 1, 2022
- “Legal Issues: Audit Letters, Government Code Section 1090 and Wireless Update,” League of California Cities Annual Conference and Expo, Sept. 8, 2022
- “Essential Hour: The Basics of Municipal Revenues: Taxes, Fees, and Assessments,” League of California Cities Webinar, Aug. 5, 2022
- “Rate Setting in Uncertain Times,” Association of California Water Agencies Spring Conference, May 5, 2022
- “Lessons Learned from the 2015 Drought: How to Prepare for the Next One,” Association of California Water Agencies Spring Conference, May 4, 2022
- “Rate Setting Under Propositions 218 and 26,” California Special Districts Association Virtual Workshop, Mar. 30 and Mar. 31, 2022