BBK
BEST BEST & KRIEGER LLP

PARTNER

Paula de Sousa

She/Her

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San Diego

Paula C. P. de Sousa serves as general and special counsel to public agencies. With over 25 years of experience, Paula is knowledgeable on all facets of special district representation and issues related to Local Agency Formation Commissions in California. A partner in Best Best & Krieger's Special Districts practice group, Paula is based in the firm's San Diego office.

General and Special Counsel
Paula practices in most areas of public agency representation, including issues related to the Political Reform Act, Brown Act, California Public Records Act, public works construction and purchasing, real property, and the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000. Paula serves as general counsel to a number of clients including:

- Padre Dam Municipal Water District
- Santa Fe Irrigation District
- Sweetwater Authority
- Fallbrook Public Utility District
- Valley Center Municipal Water District
- Los Angeles County Affordable Housing Solutions (LACAHSA)
- San Bernardino LAFCO
- California Association of Local Agency Formation Commissions (CALAFCO)

Local Agency Formation Commissions

Paula also serves as general counsel to the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) for San Bernardino County, assistant general counsel to Orange County LAFCO and general counsel to the California Association of Local Agency Formation Commissions (CALAFCO).

CORE PRACTICES

California Public Records Act

Open Government & Ethics

Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO)

Special Districts

Water

EDUCATION & ADMISSIONS

Education

University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law, J.D.

University of California, Santa Barbara, B.A., political science

Bar Admissions

California

With regard to the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000, Paula provides general counsel services to LAFCOs and regularly advises other public agency clients with respect to LAFCO-related issues. In her role with CALAFCO, she advises on, and assists in, the drafting of legislation on behalf of the organization, which represents, educates and supports its member LAFCOs. She has authored several white paper reports on legislative changes impacting changes of organization and reorganizations of California local agencies.

Paula's vast experience representing special districts on issues and legal matters related to water, sewer and transportation continually provides opportunities for her to be involved with special district industry organizations, such as

the California Special Districts Association (CSDA). Within CSDA, Paula is a past member of its Professional Development Committee, Membership Services Committee, and currently serves on several CSDA Expert Feedback Teams.

Notable Experience

- Represents multiple special districts providing water, sewer, and/or other services.
- Represents LAFCOs as general and special counsel.
- Represented the North County Transit District and oversaw legal issues related to the Sprinter rail project encompassing 22 miles of land connecting the California cities of Oceanside, Vista, San Marcos and Escondido along the Highway 78 corridor.
- Represented the Metro Wastewater Joint Powers Authority, a coalition of 12 municipalities and special districts that all own capacity in San Diego's regional wastewater facilities.

Accolades

- The Best Lawyers in America®, Environmental Law 2019–2026
- *San Diego Business Journal*, Women of Influence in Law, 2023, 2026
- *San Diego Business Journal*, Leaders in Law finalist, 2021
- *San Diego Magazine*, Best Attorney, 2018
- *San Diego Business Journal*, Women Who Mean Business finalist, 2012
- YWCA San Diego Tribute to Women & Industry (TWIN) award recipient, 2004
- San Diego Komen Affiliate Honorary Survivor of the Year, 2003
- San Diego Komen Affiliate Volunteer Survivor of the Year, 2000

Professional & Community Involvement

- California Association of Local Agency Formation Commissions
- Susan G. Komen for the Cure, San Diego Affiliate, Leadership Council
- Susan G. Komen for the Cure, “MORE THAN PINK Walk” Committee
- Susan G. Komen for the Cure, San Diego Affiliate, Past Board Member
- San Diego County Bar Association
- The Lawyers Club

Thought Leadership

Publications

- “California’s Moratorium on Water Shut-Offs Extended and Expanded,” BBK Legal Alert, Oct. 1, 2021
- “California Water and Wastewater Arrearage Payment Program Details: Arrearage Funding Program Survey is Now Open,” BBK Legal Alert, Aug. 17, 2021

- "California Adopts Measures Targeting Multifamily Residential Buildings for Water Conservation," *PublicCEO*, Oct. 26, 2016
- “The Ins and Outs of Joint Powers Authorities in California” BBK Legal Alert, Jan.14, 2016

Presentations

- "AI and Local Government: What LAFCO Leaders Need to Know," California Association of Local Agency Formation Commissions Annual Conference, Oct. 23, 2026
- "Legal Counsel Roundtable," California Association of Local Agency Formation Commissions Annual Conference, Oct. 22, 2026
- "What is LAFCO? The Game Show," California Association of Local Agency Formation Commissions Annual Conference, Oct. 21, 2026
- "LAFCO 201: Applying Judgment in Complex Decisions," CALAFCO-U Training Series, Apr. 22, 2026
- “LAFCO 101,” California Association of Recreation and Park Districts Annual Conference, May 23, 2025
- “Cracking the Code for Island Annexations: Insights, Challenges, and What’s Next,” California Association of Local Agency Formation Commissions Staff Workshop, May 1, 2025
- “LAFCo 101: Building on the Basics of LAFCo,” California Association of Local Agency Formation Commissions Annual Conference, Oct. 18, 2023
- “How to Run a LAFCo Meeting,” California Association of Local Agency Formation Commissions' Staff Workshop, April 27, 2023
- "OK Boomer! Strategies for Creating Dynamic Multi-Generational Teams," League of California Cities City Clerks New Law and Elections Seminar, Dec. 7, 2022
- “Municipal Service Reviews: It's a Brand New Ballgame,” The California Association of Local Agency Formation Commissions Annual Conference, Oct. 19, 2022
- “Building on the Basics of LAFCo (LAFCo 101),” The California Association of Local Agency Formation Commissions Annual Conference, Oct. 19, 2022
- “Forming a Community Services District: Not Your Ordinary Formation,” California Association of Local Agency Formation Commissions University Virtual Webinar Session, July 14, 2021
- “Busting the LAFCo Myths: Keys to Understanding and Working with Your LAFCo,” Educational Workshop, City Clerks Association of California, Jun. 7-8, 2021
- “LAFCo 101 – Understanding and Applying the Basics,” California Association of Local Agency Formation Commissions Annual Conference, Oct. 30, 2019
- “LAFCo and State Legislative Overrides – What’s That All About Anyway?” California Association of Local Agency Formation Commissions Annual Conference, Oct. 28, 2016