

# Daily Journal

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## TOP WOMEN LAWYERS 2026



### THEANE D. EVANGELIS

GIBSON, DUNN & CRUTCHER

LOS ANGELES

LITIGATION

**T**heane D. Evangelis is the co-chair of Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP's global litigation practice group. The extensive range of her expertise shows in her membership in the firm's appellate, class action, labor and employment, media, entertainment and technology and crisis management practice groups as well.

She joined the firm after clerkships with Sandra Day O'Connor at the U.S. Supreme Court and with Judge Alex Kozinski at the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

In April, Evangelis received a 2026 Beacon of Justice Award from the Friends of the Los Angeles County Law Library. "What an honor to be named alongside Judge [Dean] Pregerson," Evangelis said. "And I was introduced by City Attorney Hydee Feldstein Soto."

In a major arbitration case upcoming at the state Supreme Court, Evangelis heads the team representing the delivery service Shipt Inc. The outcome could determine whether workers in California can evade the individual arbitration agreements they entered with their employers simply by asserting wage-and-hour claims through a "headless" Private Attorneys General Act (PAGA) action in which they purport to recover civil penalties suffered by other employees, but not themselves.

"The California Supreme Court reached out and sua sponte took this case, which shows how important it could be," Evangelis said. That's when Shipt turned to Evangelis and Gibson Dunn to defend it.

The plaintiff, who used the Shipt app as a grocery shopper, sued Shipt under PAGA, alleging that Shipt misclassified her and other shoppers as independent contractors and violated various wage-and-hour laws applicable to employees. To avoid having the matter decided under a binding arbitration agreement she had signed

with Shipt, she purported to seek relief under PAGA only on behalf of other aggrieved employees.

The trial court found this permissible and denied Shipt's motion to compel arbitration. The Court of Appeal reversed, holding that because PAGA authorizes an employee to pursue claims "on behalf of the employee and other current and former employees," a PAGA plaintiff may not forgo her individual claims and pursue claims only on behalf of other employees. Then the high court stepped in. *Leeper v. Shipt Inc.*, S289305 (Ca. S. Ct., rev. gtd. Apr. 16, 2025).

"We used to see a lot of meritless UCL cases, until the Legislature imposed a standing requirement," Evangelis said, referring to the state's unfair competition law. "It ensures the parties have skin in the game, to avoid floods of cases. We could see the same thing happening here."

Evangelis takes a strong stand in her high court briefing. "This case is a flagrant attempt to circumvent the U.S. Supreme Court's holding in *Viking River Cruises, Inc. v. Moriana*," she asserted. "This court should reject plaintiff's flawed reading of the PAGA statute..."

Oral argument in the case is expected sometime in the fall.