

Daily Journal

DECEMBER 9, 2020



TOP WHITE COLLAR LAWYERS 2020

H. Dean Steward

Steward has practiced federal criminal defense for 41 years and has tried more than 150 cases before juries in federal court. His 20 years as a sole practitioner at his namesake firm follows a career as a federal defender in Hawaii and Los Angeles; in 1988 he opened the federal defender's office in Orange County and practiced there until 2000.

His father was U.S. attorney for the Southern District in the 1970s. A daughter is a senior counsel for Interpol. As a defense lawyer, "I'm the black sheep," Steward laughed. A former firefighter, he said that in a sense he's still doing the same kind of work: "I got a call the other day from a dentist whose office was full of FBI agents seizing his computers and asking about insurance billing issues. I had to jump into action and calm the situation, which I did. It's putting out fires in a different context."

In July, Steward scored a major win at the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for client Mohamed Salah by obtaining reversal of a district court's conviction for federal mortgage fraud in a case where the government disclosed after the close of evidence new information that impeached one of its witnesses. *U.S. v. Salah*, 18-50171 (9th Cir., op. filed July 17, 2020).

Steward's high profile clients have included Lori Drew, acquitted in 2009 of cyberbullying

a friend's daughter who committed suicide; ex-Los Angeles County Undersheriff Paul Tanaka; and Michael J. Avenatti, the currently suspended Los Angeles attorney and outspoken Donald Trump critic who faces bank fraud, perjury, wire fraud and tax law charges in the Central District. *U.S. v. Avenatti*, 19-cr-00061 (C.D. Cal., filed April 10, 2019).

"The charges are complex, pushed by a large prosecution team litigating everything you can imagine," Steward said. "It took dozens of hours just trying to get him out on bail, far more time than I anticipated."

Even returning him to California was a challenge. Avenatti was confined in the Metropolitan Correctional Center in Manhattan, and the conditions of his April release required a team of three lawyers to in turn escort him to the airport, fly with him to Los Angeles and drive him to Venice for home confinement at a friend's place.

In September, prosecutors accused him of using a computer in violations of his release conditions. Steward denied the claim. He has recently obtained a trial continuance to early next year and a severance of some of the charges to narrow the case.

"You have to wonder whether Mr. Avenatti's celebrity and his anti-Trump stance has anything to do with all this," Steward said. "We know Trump has a vindictive streak. Meanwhile, he's one of my top ten all-time



H. DEAN STEWARD APC
SAN CLEMENTE

clients. He's very active in his defense, and he's a marvelous lawyer with great instincts."

— John Roemer

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