

Melissa Avila, Esq.

Avila Mediation

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NEUTRAL PROFILE

I am a high-impact neutral specializing in the resolution of complex employment and civil litigation. Drawing on over 13 years of trial experience in courts across California and the Courts of Appeal, I bring a pragmatic trial-ready perspective to every mediation utilizing advanced virtual platforms to facilitate seamless remote resolutions throughout California.

Trained at the Straus Institute for Dispute Resolution and currently serving as a **Settlement Officer for Resolve Law Los Angeles** and on the **Santa Barbara CADRe** and **MVP panels**, I am recognized for my ability to facilitate resolution in high conflict matters. My deep roots in Plaintiff-side advocacy allow me to provide the rigorous reality-testing and expectation management necessary to bridge the gap and deliver results for both sides of the table.

MEDIATION EXPERIENCE

Employment Law: I specialize in the resolution of sensitive and fact-driven disputes involving:

- **Discrimination & Harassment** (Protected categories under FEHA)
- **Whistleblower & Labor Code Retaliation**
- **Wrongful Termination in Violation of Public Policy**
- **Reasonable Accommodation & Interactive Process Failures**
- **CFRA / FMLA Leave Disputes**

Wage, Hour & Representative Actions: I bring extensive trial experience to the resolution of high-stakes compensation disputes, including:

- **PAGA & Class Action Representative Claims**
- **Meal & Rest Break Compliance**
- **Regular Rate & Overtime Miscalculations**
- **Exempt vs. Non-Exempt Misclassifications**
- **Independent Contractor (AB 5) Analysis**

Civil Litigation & Tort: Broad experience in general civil matters, including mediating personal injury and premises liability cases, and resolving appellate-level disputes.

SELECT TESTIMONIALS

“Melissa is a strong litigator with extensive experience on both plaintiff and defense sides which gives her unique perspective and the ability to successfully negotiate. it has been a pleasure to work with her” – Defense Side Employment Law Attorney

“Her sharp legal acumen and unwavering professionalism, makes her an exceptional attorney

*both in and outside the courtroom. I would recommend Melissa without hesitation.” – Plaintiff
Employment Law Attorney*

“Melissa brought a fresh perspective to the MSC. She’s an effective negotiator and tenacious mediator.” – Mediator and Arbitrator with ADR in Los Angeles

COURT & PANEL APPOINTMENTS

- **Settlement Officer | Volunteer Mediator**, Resolve Law Los Angeles (2025–Present).
- **Panel Mediator**, Santa Barbara Superior Court CADRe Program. (2025–Present).
- **Panel Mediator**, MVP (Mediation Volunteer Program). (2025–Present).

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

AVILA MEDIATION | Santa Barbara & Virtually Throughout CA *Mediator* | Jan. 2025 – Present

- Providing full-time private neutral services, virtually resolving complex employment and civil litigation cases throughout California.

DIEFER LAW GROUP, PC | Dana Point, CA *Employment Law Trial Counsel* | March 2022 – December 2024

- Litigated complex employment matters and negotiated hundreds of pre-trial settlements.

LAW OFFICES OF RAMIN R. YOUNESSI, APC | Los Angeles, CA *Employment Law Trial Counsel* | June 2018 – February 2022

- Managed the full litigation lifecycle of high-stakes FEHA, PAGA, and class action representative claims, focusing on strategic case valuation and settlement.

LAW OFFICE OF MELISSA NEWMAN, APC | Los Angeles, CA *Owner | Civil Litigation Counsel* | June 2016 – June 2018

- Founded and managed a boutique civil litigation practice specializing in employment law.

LAW OFFICE OF FRANK PRAY | Newport Beach, CA *Trial Counsel* | March 2013 – June 2016

- Served as trial counsel in numerous employment law matters, gaining deep insight into wage-and-hour compliance and representative claim exposure.

EDUCATION & TRAINING

- **Pepperdine Law, Straus Institute**, “Mediating the Litigated Case” (42-hour program).
- **Chapman University School of Law, J.D.**
 - *Chapman Law Review*, Executive Production Editor; President, Employment Law Society.
- **University of California Santa Cruz**, B.A. *magna cum laude*.

BAR ADMISSIONS

- State Bar of California (Admitted 2012).
- U.S. District Court, Central District of California (Admitted 2015).