



THE PLAINTIFFS'

A SPECIAL REPORT

HOT LIST

- Baron & Budd ● Barrack, Rodos & Bacine ● Beasley, Allen, Crow, Methvin, Portis & Miles ● Berger & Montague
- Bernstein Liebhard ● Bernstein Litowitz Berger & Grossmann ● Cohen Milstein Sellers & Toll ● Girard Gibbs ● Grant & Eisenhofer
- Hagens Berman Sobol Shapiro ● Hausfeld ● Korein Tillery ● Labaton Sucharow ● Lieff Cabraser Heimann & Bernstein
- Milberg ● Motley Rice ● Panish Shea & Boyle ● Phillips & Cohen ● Spector Roseman Kodroff & Willis

ISTOCKPHOTO/FENIX1984

Every year, *The National Law Journal* takes the pulse of the plaintiffs bar by examining its most successful practices. To identify them, we asked our readers to nominate firms in the United States that have done exemplary, cutting-edge work on the plaintiffs side. We looked for firms that scored at least one significant plaintiffs win between June 30, 2011, and July 1, 2012, and that possessed an impressive track record of wins within the past three to five years. We also conducted our own extensive research before settling upon the 19 firms you'll read about here.



BRIAN PANISH


 Panish Shea & Boyle

In 2008, a U.S. fighter jet plummeted into a San Diego neighborhood, incinerating Don Yoon's home. It killed his two baby daughters, his 36-year-old wife and his mother-in-law. The government acknowledged that the F-18 Hornet suffered mechanical failure, compounded by an error of the pilot, who ejected safely.

In one of the largest wrongful death awards against the United States, Panish Shea & Boyle attorneys secured \$17.8 million for Yoon and surviving family members. The government had disputed the damages. Because the case was brought under the Federal Tort Claims Act, a bench trial resulted in federal court. Name partner Brian Panish said that the case was tough, given San Diego's reliance on the military industry and the nationality of the plaintiffs.

"The goal was to get the court and community to see beyond their possible natural inclinations," Panish said. "I think we achieved that."

The Yoon trial was among a string of recent successes for Panish Shea & Boyle. The Los Angeles firm, with just 14 lawyers total, represents individual personal-injury plaintiffs and has recovered more than \$91 million in verdicts since June. Since the start of 2011, it has won more than \$500 million in verdicts and settlements.

In July 2011, the firm obtained a \$17 million jury verdict in Los Angeles County Superior Court for Mary Cuthbertson, whose visually impaired son mistook the gap between the cars on a Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transit Authority train for an open train door and fell off the platform between cars; he climbed halfway back up but was crushed to death when the train began to move, according to trial evidence. The agency has appealed the verdict.

The firm also won a \$36.5 million jury verdict in June in state court for Jaishree and Prakash Sheth. The couple were car passengers traveling on a California freeway when a truck owned and operated by Schneider National Inc. tried to pass, crossed over into their lane and hit their vehicle, according to the evidence presented at trial. Jaishree Sheth initially was completely paralyzed. Panish lawyers relied on extensive expert testimony to recreate the crash, since causation was a major issue.

In December, the firm obtained a \$20 million verdict for Marina Rivas. While driving, she was hit by a tractor-trailer driven by a J.B. Hunt Transport Services Inc. employee. Panish lawyers said they rejected the defense's \$2 million settlement offer and charged ahead to trial.

—LEIGH JONES