

# Daily Journal

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## ‘Hell, Yes’: How 2 top plaintiff lawyers joined forces to fight for women

**After decades of parallel careers fighting workplace discrimination and sexual harassment, plaintiff attorneys Genie E. Harrison and Maryann P. Gallagher have merged their female-centered practices into a collaborative alliance aimed at challenging powerful institutions and training the next generation of women trial lawyers.**

By John Roemer

Special to the Daily Journal

**A**fter dinner at a Westlake Village restaurant one night last April, longtime friends and plaintiff attorneys Genie E. Harrison and Maryann P. Gallagher were walking with their husbands to their cars.

“We’d been talking about business and life,” Harrison said, so I asked Maryann, “Would you ever consider an affiliation together?”

Gallagher didn’t hesitate. “Hell, yes,” she said.

Three months later the sex abuse and employment litigators have united their female-centered practices so they can together continue targeting male-dominated companies, sports leagues, and academic institutions.

And they have vowed to carry on their longstanding efforts to advance younger women in the legal profession.

In an announcement on Monday, they said that Genie Harrison Law Firm APC and the Law Offices of Maryann P. Gallagher are now an alliance and that each will be of counsel to the other. They are sharing office space in Calabasas, where Harrison has long had her headquarters.

“It’s all the energy of our two firms under one roof, and we see it as a

no-drama zone where our people can practice law, have families and do business together,” said Gallagher, who moved from her South Broadway offices.

“We have all our top awards hanging together in our conference room,” added Harrison. There are a lot of them, including her Best Lawyers’ 2022 Plaintiff Employment Lawyer of the Year and a decade’s worth of Top 10 California Super Lawyers plus many Daily Journal accolades.

Gallagher’s display shows that she is only the second woman ever to be named Consumer Attorneys Association of Los Angeles Trial Lawyer of the Year, along with the group’s Ted Horn Award.

“Those awards are so meaningful to us,” Harrison said. “Over the years we’ve sent each other flowers after wins or commiserated when things didn’t work out. Now that we’re here together, forget the cases, it’s just the energy flowing, the talk, the brainstorming. We lift each other up.”

People who know them professionally applauded the new dual practice. Among them: a longtime opposing counsel. “I have known and have vied against Maryann and Genie for many years,” emailed Littler Mendelson PC shareholder Helene J. Wasserman.

“They share a zealous advocacy on behalf of their clients, as well as

a respect for the practice of law. I wish these two very accomplished women the best of luck in their association.”

Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Ruth A. Kwan worked with Harrison and Gallagher in 2021 to put in place Rule of Court 3.93, which permits multiple attorneys to represent a single party at trial. The effect is to let senior lawyers guide younger associates as they learn courtroom skills.

“Oh my God, they’ll bring a fantastic set of skills to the table,” Kwan said in a phone interview about Harrison and Gallagher’s new association. “Maryann Gallagher is revered by the plaintiff bar for her mentorship. And she’s an unrelenting trial attorney. She fights for her clients whether the case is big or small.

“And Genie Harrison was very involved as a bar leader when the rule was enacted. Our bench understands well the need to train the next generation of lawyers.”

Gallagher and Harrison have had major recent wins.

Gallagher and co-counsel obtained a \$10 million jury verdict for a college professor subjected to sexual harassment and retaliation. *Odom v. Los Angeles Community College District*, BC724401 (L.A. Super. Ct., filed Oct. 4, 2018).

Gallagher said she took advantage of Rule 3.93 when trying the Odom case. Calling it a “teaching trial,” she litigated alongside veteran co-counsel Tracy L. Fehr of Alexander Morrison + Fehr LLP with help from associate Viridiana E. Alcves and sole practitioner Jamie E. Wright.

“We had a very smart client who articulated how debilitating and impactful sexual harassment is,” Gallagher said.

That aspect of Gallagher’s presentation to the jury mirrored the anguish and pain displayed by her client 30 years ago in a landmark trial and appeal in which Gallagher established that MeToo evidence was valid in sexual harassment claims. *Bihun v. AT&T Information Systems Inc.*, B053181 (2d DCA, op. filed Feb. 24, 1993).

In the Odom case, after an appellate panel ordered a new trial due to misconduct by the trial judge, Gallagher petitioned for review at the state Supreme Court. *Odom v. Los Angeles Community College District*, S290976 (S. Ct., petition filed May 19, 2025).

For their part, Harrison and co-counsel won an \$8 million settlement, subject to court approval, that included substantial programmatic relief for women workers who alleged equal pay and gender discrimination and a hostile work

environment at a video game maker. *Doe et al. v. Niantic Inc. et al.*, 23S-TCV15935 (L.A. Super. Ct., filed April 14, 2023).

That result flowed from the \$100 million Harrison obtained on similar claims by women workers at another video game maker. She substituted in after the women became dissatisfied with a \$10 million deal negotiated by prior male counsel. *McCracken et al. v. Riot Games Inc.*, 18STCV03957 (L.A. Super. Ct., filed Nov. 6, 2018).

And although Harrison and Gallagher have never before tried cases together, they have a long parallel history of engagement in advancing the cause of women facing workplace sexual harassment and discrimination.

Harrison cited Gallagher's Bihun precedent when she was a young lawyer doing employment cases. "There were so few of us women lawyers doing this work back then," Harrison said. "I was so aware of Maryann's work as I trudged forward."

When Harrison successfully litigated a series of employment discrimination cases for minority and female plaintiffs against the Los Angeles Fire Department, she got noticed by another pioneer of women's employment law, Christine D. Spagnoli of Greene, Broillet & Wheeler LLP.

"She roped me into CAALA," Harrison said, "and that's where I met Maryann."

Now, Gallagher and Harrison are planning how their firms will work

in combination. For a trial scheduled in September over whistleblower claims by workers at a food distribution company, Gallagher plans to bring on board a Harrison law partner, Mia Munro, and possibly others. *Williams et al. v. Sysco Riverside Inc.*, 20STCV18692 (L.A. Super. Ct., filed June 5, 2020).

"It will be another teaching trial," Gallagher said. "I'll put as many chairs as I can fit at the plaintiff table."

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