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Top 100 Lawyers 2025



Patrick M. Ryan

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San Francisco

Patrick M. Ryan represents clients across the U.S. in high-stakes cases as chair of the litigation group and co-managing partner of Bartko Pavia LLP, a 58-attorney full-range legal services boutique.

He specializes in intellectual property and antitrust litigation, having moved to Bartko in 2014 from partnerships at global law firms. "Here, I can take the cases I want to take without being subject to a bureaucracy that wants to say 'no,'" Ryan said.

This year, he oversaw the merger of his firm with New York's Pavia & Harcourt boutique — formalizing and rebranding a longstanding relationship between shops that had been referring business to one another for years. "It's been terrific and seamless," Ryan said.

He added: "I love taking the hard case, the ones that other lawyers think are unwinnable, because that makes winning all the sweeter."

In one challenge this year, Ryan obtained a milestone \$222 million jury verdict as lead counsel in a trade secrets case for a client that claimed retail giant Wal-Mart Inc. misappropriated its food waste reduction system that used machine learning to predict the shelf life of produce.

It was one of the largest verdicts in Arkansas history and likely the highest trade secret verdict in the history of the state, one Arkansas news outlet reported.

The May 2025 outcome was especially notable because Ryan had to retry a case in which a different firm in 2021 obtained a \$110 million judgment that was set aside in 2023 over an attorney conduct issue. And the venue appeared to be daunting: Ryan took on Wal-Mart in Arkansas, its home turf. *Zest Labs Inc. v. Wal-Mart Inc.*, 4:18-cv-00500 (E.D. Ark., filed Aug. 1, 2018).

The jury's award included \$72.7 million in compensatory damages plus \$150 million

in punitives. The case settled at the end of July for an undisclosed sum with no appeal by the defense.

The settlement deal prevented Ryan from discussing the case, but his closing statement — preserved in an official court transcript — encapsulated for jurors the essence of his argument: "It's a big company taking a little company's ideas because they're arrogant enough to think, 'We can just do what we want.'"

Meanwhile, Ryan and his Bartko Pavia team have enlarged their long-running complex antitrust case on behalf of a large group of hospitals asserting claims that multiple Blue Cross and Blue Shield insurance entities conspired to fix prices and suppress competition.

An initial group of cases has survived defense demurrers, motions to strike and efforts at removal to federal court from state court in Alameda County. This year, Ryan has filed eight additional cases consolidated as *Chinese Hospital Ass'n v. Blue Cross of California et al.*, 25CV113731 (Alameda Co. Super. Ct., filed Feb. 15, 2025).

"Against the Blue behemoth, we are vigorously fighting for these healthcare providers, who care for California's sick and injured," Ryan said. "When the Blues harmed these hospitals to the tune of billions of dollars collectively, the Blues harmed us all."