

# Daily Journal

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## TOP WHITE COLLAR LAWYERS 2020

### Grant P. Fondo

**A** former federal prosecutor in the Northern District, Fondo moved to Goodwin in 2013. He heads the firm's California litigation department, and is a member of its securities litigation and white collar defense group. Fondo founded and co-chairs Goodwin's digital currency and blockchain technology practice. His expertise allows him to advise companies in that arena along with venture capital and private equity firms, financial institutions and directors, officers and management regarding criminal, Securities and Exchange Commission, the Department of the Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network and Commodity Futures Trading Commission investigations, cyber-hacking matters and internal investigations.

As a former prosecutor now sitting at the defense table, he said the dual nature of his career is satisfying. "I've enjoyed both sides. The white collar bar is a nice place to be."

Among Fondo's high profile clients is former Wells Fargo Bank chairman and CEO John Stumpf, whom he's represented since 2016 in litigation and government investigations over the unauthorized customer accounts scandal. Among the cases was *Rassoli v. Wells Fargo & Co.*, 2:17-cv-01003 (C.D. Cal., filed Feb. 8, 2017). Fondo and his team obtained the dismissal of federal RICO claims against Stumpf; other cases are ongoing.

"As a lawyer, you're gratified when someone puts their trust in you," Fondo said. He

declined to comment on the substance of the cases.

Fondo successfully defended former JPMorgan investment banking analyst Ashish Aggarwal against federal insider trading charges in a 30-count criminal indictment. The win, in February 2017, was the first successful defense of an insider trading case since the U.S. Supreme Court's *Salman* opinion in 2016 lowered the bar for prosecutors, Fondo said. A parallel civil case by the SEC is in progress. *SEC v. Aggarwal*, 2:15-cv-06460 (C.D. Cal., filed Aug. 25, 2015).

Fondo leads Goodwin's representation the CEO of Centra Tech, a former cryptocurrency debit card company, in a criminal matter in New York. The indictment alleged securities fraud and money laundering related to the unregistered sale of \$25 million worth of securities in the form of digital tokens. The case gained notoriety in part because professional boxer Floyd Mayweather Jr. and music producer Khaled Khaled, known as DJ Khaled, promoted the sale, and the SEC later announced settled charges against both of them for failing to disclose payments they received for promoting Centra Tech's token sale. Sharma entered a guilty plea and is scheduled to be sentenced in January 2021. *U.S. v. Sharma*, 1:18-cr-00340 (S.D. N.Y., filed May 14, 2018).

Fondo and colleagues represent an attorney in connection with an international criminal tax evasion investigation by the U.S. Department of Justice and the Internal



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Revenue Service in a case involving hundreds of millions of dollars. The details remain confidential. "It is particularly gratifying when another lawyer asks us to represent them when their liberty and reputation are at stake," Fondo said.

— John Roemer

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