

Nathaniel Johnson

Senior Associate

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Nate Johnson is a senior associate with Alston & Bird's Environment, Land Use & Natural Resources Group. He represents clients at the intersection of natural resource production and water quality and use, assisting them in navigating the shifting legal and regulatory landscape of oil and gas production. He also has substantial experience defending clients against environmental contamination claims and in complex land use disputes involving local, state, and federal regulators.

Nate has represented pro bono clients in a number of legal settings, including immigration, domestic violence restraining orders, adoption and children's rights, environmental conservancy, landlord-tenant disputes, and clemency for federal prisoners.

Nate received his J.D. from the University of California, Berkeley School of Law. During law school, he was the editor-in-chief for the *Ecology Law Quarterly* and was awarded Best Respondent Brief in the James Patterson McBaine Honors Moot Competition. Before law school, Nate graduated with honors in political science and philosophy from the University of Kansas, where he was champion of the 2009 National Debate Tournament.

Representative Experience

- Represented a major energy production company, along with impacted business partners and royalty owners, in a challenge to a countywide ballot initiative that would have shut down operations at the eighth-largest oil field in the state by prohibiting well stimulation and the drilling of new wells, and imposing a deadline on the injection or impoundment of produced water throughout the county. Obtained a trial court judgment enjoining enforcement of the operative provisions of the initiative.
- Defended a statewide energy industry trade association as intervener in litigation filed by environmental organizations challenging a local policy of environmental review of permits issued to energy producers that would have the effect of rendering operations throughout Los Angeles cost-prohibitive. Raised counter-claims to avoid deleterious effects of improper settlement by opposing parties and defeated numerous dispositive pleading motions, including those under the California Anti-Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation (SLAPP) law.
- Represented seven oil companies (who produce roughly 90 percent of the oil in California) as interveners defending a lawsuit brought by environmental organizations against the state oil and gas agency that alleged violations of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act and sought the immediate shut-in of thousands of injection wells across the state. Obtained a trial court judgment denying the petitioners' claims in their entirety.
- Represented an energy company in a lawsuit brought under the California Environmental Quality Act that challenges the propriety of permits to drill oil and gas wells in a major California oil field.
- Defended a major energy company against conspiracy allegations related to California's administration of the Underground Injection Control program raised under the federal Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act and Section 1983 of the Civil Rights Act.

- Advised energy production clients on Proposition 65 discharge claims related to underground injection activities during oil and gas production.

Publications & Presentations

Publications

- “Decision on Standing in PFAS Cases Raises Serious Concerns,” *The Daily Journal*, October 23, 2019.
- “Letter to the Editor: Responding to OEHHA on PFAs,” *The Recorder*, February 28, 2019.
- “The New Reality of PFAS Liability in California,” *The Recorder*, November 20, 2018.
- “Insight: PFAS Liability Is Coming to California,” *Bloomberg Environment*, October 31, 2018.
- “PFAS: Not Your Typical Emerging Contaminants – Part 2,” *Law360*, May 31, 2018.
- “PFAS: Not Your Typical Emerging Contaminants – Part 1,” *Law360*, May 30, 2018.

Professional & Community Engagement

- Downtown Los Angeles Neighborhood Council, Civic Center – financial district business director
- Los Angeles Metropolitan Debate League, board of directors

Education

- University of California, Berkeley (J.D., 2013)
- University of Kansas (B.A., 2009)

Admitted to Practice

- California

Related Services

Environment, Land Use & Natural Resources | Perfluoroalkyl & Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)