

SAN FRANCISCO  
**Daily Journal**

May 12, 2010

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## TOP WOMEN LITIGATORS

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### **Carolyn H. Cottrell**

SAN FRANCISCO

**Law Firm:** Schneider Wallace Cottrell Brayton Konecky

**Practice Area:** Employment class actions, sexual harassment

**Years in Practice:** 17

**Law School:** Pacific McGeorge School of Law

Schneider Wallace Cottrell Brayton Konecky partner Carolyn Cottrell has spent much of her career doing plaintiffs' work on behalf of workers subjected to discrimination, harassment, retaliation and illegal pay practices. Her colleagues say that over the past two years, she's obtained almost \$15 million for classes of employees denied compensation they claimed they were owed. Cottrell won

a \$2 million settlement in February on behalf of 1,700 customer service workers at California Check Cashing, who claimed that they were locked into the facilities for "safety reasons" while being denied their meal and rest breaks and working off the clock. In February 2009, Cottrell took on the company U.S. Remodelers Inc. in Alameda County Superior Court. After about a year of litigation, she won a \$1.8 million settlement for installers who had accused the company of requiring them to work long hours without compensation or being reimbursed for equipment and other work-related expenses. "The employers dug in their heels and were convinced they hadn't broken the law," Cottrell said. "We were able to convince them they were wrong and needed to compensate their employees properly." Sexual harassment litigation has become one of her focuses, although she is still handling illegal pay practice cases around the country. She's preparing to go to trial in June on behalf of 4,700 production line employees accusing their company, a beef processing facility, of refusing to properly compensate the already-low wage earners.

**Pretrial Ritual:** Cottrell said she doesn't have a specific pretrial ritual, but once she gets into "her zone," she has to do the same thing every morning: take a certain path of travel, get coffee at the same place, etc.

**Biggest Career Break:** Cottrell briefly began her career as a defense attorney and said her big break came when she decided to switch paths and join her current firm to handle class actions protecting employees rights.