

# Daily Journal

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## TOP WOMEN LAWYERS



### MARY-CHRISTINE (M.C.) SUNGAILA

Snell & Wilmer  
Costa Mesa

**Practice type:** Appellate Litigation

**Specialty:** Toxic tort, product liability, human rights, strategic consulting

Sungaila has a passion for appellate law and said that she is eager for more opportunities to tackle challenging issues.

“There are cases all over the country — big, juicy and important, and I want to be involved,” she said.

Sungaila said that she’d like to see appellate lawyers becoming involved with trial teams at an earlier stage “and making smarter choices on which cases to take up on appeal.”

“Some companies now have an interest in having someone coordinating appellate work early on,” Sungaila said.

While trial lawyers focus on facts and evidence, Sungaila said her “interest is not on one particular case but a whole range — which are best to push on particular issues and which are not and figuring out strategic approaches to motions. I plan five or six moves ahead.”

She said some in-house counsel she has dealt with say, “‘You think like a general counsel.’ But I say, ‘No, I think like an appellate lawyer.’”

If you choose the wrong case to appeal, she added, “It can have adverse consequences on your client.”

That’s why Sungaila wants trial and appellate attorneys to work as a team.

“It’s messy in the real world,” she said. “You have to move and be nimble.”

Among Sungaila’s significant cases of late, she served as lead counsel on an amicus brief that the International Association of Defense Counsel filed in support of Wal-Mart, which had been sued for allegedly discriminating against women in pay and promotions. Wal-Mart won the appeal last year. *Wal-Mart Stores Inc. v. Dukes*, 10-277.

— Pat Broderick