

**THE ZUMBRUN LAW FIRM**  
*A Professional Corporation*

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**SACRAMENTO'S RONALD A. ZUMBRUN SELECTED FOR THE  
YALE BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY OF AMERICAN LAW**

**Sacramento, California [May 26, 2009]**: Today the Yale University Press published the Yale Biographical Dictionary of American Law. It is the first book ever published to provide comprehensive biographical sketches of the leading figures in the history of American Law. Covering some 711 individuals beginning in the year 1630, the volume runs 640 pages and serves as a general reference tool for anyone with an interest in law: legal professionals, students and scholars, journalists and the general reader.

Included are Supreme Court justices and federal and state judges, solicitors and attorneys general, court reporters, lawyers, presidents and legislators, law professors and treatise writers, journalists, historians, biographers, philosophers, organization officials, litigants, popular culture heroes and others.

Editor Roger K. Newman is a recognized author and a faculty member of the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. An editorial board of ten well-known scholars assisted in the completion of the project.

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The excerpt on Ronald A. Zumbun states:

**“Zumbun, Ronald A.**, lawyer, has been a pioneer in public interest law. He co-founded the Pacific Legal Foundation (PLF) in 1973 after serving in the gubernatorial administration of Ronald Reagan as deputy director-legal affairs for the California department of social welfare with responsibility for the legal aspects of Reagan’s welfare reform efforts. Up until that time, the term ‘public interest’ was one dimensional, being attached only to liberal organizations like Ralph Nader’s Public Citizen or the Sierra Club. PLF challenged this orthodoxy by claiming the mantle of ‘public interest’ for conservative causes such as property rights and free enterprise. It was one thing to claim that there was a conservative public interest in the law; establishing legitimacy and credibility for this claim required something more.

That is where Zumbun excelled. From the outset, he placed a premium on first-rate legal work, eschewed political entanglements, and carefully selected cases for maximum impact. Gradually, this hard work and strategic vision paid off. Over the next decade, PLF moved to the forefront of property rights and environmental litigation in California and the West. As its success and visibility mounted, PLF’s definition of a public interest that included homeowners, small businesses, and taxpayers gained increasing respect in the legal, policy, and media communities. Within a generation, the public interest mantle rested comfortably on a panoply of groups on the left and the right.

In 1987, PLF won a landmark victory in the U.S. Supreme Court in *Nollan v. California Coastal Commission*. This was the first in a series of cases over the next decade in which the Court began affording greater protection for private property rights after decades in which property rights were severely eroded. PLF was active in all of these cases. It was also involved in other areas such as supporting Allan Bakke’s claim of reverse discrimination in his medical school application in the mid-1970s and defending successfully each of the many challenges to California’s Proposition 13 property tax limitation law passed in 1978.

Zumbrun left PLF in 1995 and embarked on a career in private practice by starting The Zumbrun Law Firm, self-described as a public issues law firm. Like PLF, the firm was located in Sacramento. In this new capacity, he focused on cases that advance individual and economic freedoms and property rights. Zumbrun, born in Oak Park, Illinois, took a road less traveled after graduating from Pomona College in 1957 and Boalt Law School, University of California, Berkeley in 1961 after which he practiced law. In doing so, he transformed both American jurisprudence and the practice of public interest law.

William H. Mellor

Lee Edwards, ed., Bringing Justice to the People: The Story of the Freedom-Based Public Interest Law Movement (Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation, 2004).”

The Yale Biographical Dictionary of American Law is available through Amazon.com.

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