

Helen Gilbert, Veteran Northern District of California Prosecutor and Former National Security Chief, Joins Jenner & Block in San Francisco

News

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SAN FRANCISCO, CA, October 14, 2026 – Jenner & Block is pleased to announce that Helen Gilbert, a former federal prosecutor and trial lawyer, has joined the firm as a partner in its San Francisco office. Drawing on more than 10 years in the US Attorney's Office for the Northern District of California, including as Chief of the National Security, Cyber, and Special Prosecutions Section, Helen will guide clients through government investigations, white-collar matters, and corporate crises, with a particular focus on trade secrets and economic espionage, nation-state and criminal cyber matters, and national security.

As Chief of the National Security, Cyber, and Special Prosecutions Section for the Northern District of California, Helen supervised a team of prosecutors handling national security, cyber, trade secret, and public corruption matters. She has experienced matters involving employees taking proprietary technology overseas or to competitors, where companies must act quickly before that intellectual property is exploited or transferred. She also has worked with in-house and outside counsel at leading technology companies in artificial intelligence (AI), semiconductors, cybersecurity, and advanced mobility, as well as with companies across industries facing digital threats, often in matters of significant business risk drawing media attention. Her experience spans wire fraud, tax fraud, and other economic crimes, as well as government program fraud, including evaluating *qui tam* cases for potential criminal referral.

“Helen has handled some of the government’s most consequential national security and technology-related cases in one of the country’s most active jurisdictions, having led the National Security, Cyber, and Special Prosecutions Section for the Northern District of California,” said Co-Managing Partners Ishan Bhabha and Randy Mehrberg. “Her judgment, courtroom experience, and firsthand knowledge of how the government and companies approach these matters make her an immediate asset to clients facing high-stakes public scrutiny and business threats who are in need of fearless counsel.”

At Jenner, Helen will play a key role in the firm's Investigations, Compliance, and Defense Practice, with additional work across Business Litigation, National Security and Crisis, Data Privacy and Cybersecurity, Trade Secrets and Restrictive Covenants, and Critical and Emerging Technologies.

As Section Chief, Helen supervised the prosecution in *United States v. Linwei Ding*, in which a former Google engineer was convicted of stealing Google's AI and supercomputing trade secrets. Earlier, she led the team that investigated the DarkSide ransomware attack on Colonial Pipeline, which forced the shutdown of an East Coast fuel pipeline. The investigation led to the recovery of a significant portion of the ransom payment. Helen also served as co-lead trial counsel in the prosecution of David DePape for the assault on Paul Pelosi and the attempted kidnapping of then-Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, which resulted in a federal jury conviction and a 30-year prison sentence.

"In the case of a data breach or cyber intrusion, the first few hours can be outcome-determinative," said Katya Jestin, Co-Chair of the firm's Investigations, Compliance, and Defense Practice. "Helen brings a depth of experience and perspective that enables her to provide clear and pragmatic guidance to companies facing such crises. She advises clients on the critical initial measures to take, when to bring in law enforcement, and how to creatively use civil tools, such as temporary restraining orders and preliminary injunctions. Helen should be a company's first call in these situations."

"Helen has spent more than a decade litigating in the Northern District, and the judges on that bench know her as a prepared and credible advocate," said Reid Schar, San Francisco Office Managing Partner and Co-Chair of the firm's Litigation Department. "That standing is invaluable to clients in one of the most important venues in the country for technology companies. Her arrival deepens our trial and investigations bench in San Francisco and expands our ability to serve Bay Area clients at a pivotal moment."

Before joining the US Attorney's Office, Helen spent six years in the US Department of Justice's Civil Division—the department's largest litigating unit—in Washington, DC. She began as a lawyer on the Appellate Staff, where she served as lead counsel on civil appeals before multiple US courts of appeals and a state supreme court. She went on to serve as Counsel to the Assistant Attorney General and was then detailed to the Senate Judiciary Committee, where she advised Senator Al Franken (MN) on national security matters. She later returned to the Department's Civil Division as Chief of Staff. During her time in the Civil Division, she led the department's litigation over the constitutionality of the Defense of Marriage Act. Following the Supreme Court's decision in *United States v. Windsor*, she coordinated the federal government's implementation of that ruling across the affected agencies.

"I am thrilled to return to Jenner & Block, a firm I've long admired for its excellence and collaborative culture," said Helen. "Throughout my career, I've been drawn to complex, consequential matters at the intersection of law, technology, and national security. I look forward to

bringing that experience, and my unique perspective from leading the National Security, Cyber, and Special Prosecutions Section at the US Attorney’s Office for the Northern District of California, to Jenner’s clients, particularly as companies in the Bay Area and beyond navigate an increasingly complex landscape of enforcement, national security, cyber, and trade secret risk.”

Helen holds a JD, with high honors, from the University of Chicago Law School, where she served as Editor-in-Chief of the *University of Chicago Law Review* and was inducted into the Order of the Coif. She also holds an AB in history, *cum laude*, from Harvard University. She clerked for Judge William A. Fletcher on the US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. Her arrival marks a return to Jenner, where she was a summer associate in the Washington, DC, office in 2007.

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Related Capabilities

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