

SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL

ASIAN AMERICAN PACIFIC ISLANDER LEADERS OF INFLUENCE 2026



**MELISSA
BARTOLOME**
COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO



**CHARLES
BAYANI**
THE PAYMENT HQ



**SOPHIA
BROD**
ID STUDIOS, INC.



**SHEILAH
BUACK-SHELTON**
REDWOOD PUBLIC LAW



**HOWARD
CHAN**
CALIFORNIA STATE
UNIVERSITY, SAN MARCOS



**VALERIE
GARCIA HONG**
GARCIA HONG LAW



**MICHELLE
GASTIL**
SAN DIEGO COUNTY
BAR ASSOCIATION



**DR. LYSA
HO**
TRUECARE



**DAN
HOM**
FOCUSCOM INC.



**JULIE
HOUTH**
RUEB STOLLER DANIEL



**LAMBERT
HSU**
BENEFIT PRO INSURANCE



**JESSICA
JAVIER**
ASIAN BUSINESS
ASSOCIATION SAN DIEGO



**KRISTINE
LEE**
RADY CHILDREN'S
HEALTH SAN DIEGO



**SANDEEP
MOR**
SEMPRA



**DR. TINA
NGO BARTEL**
SAN DIEGO & IMPERIAL
CENTER OF EXCELLENCE



**MYAN
NGUYEN**
NETBINC
CORPORATION



**DR. TRACY
NGUYEN, O.D.**
DR. TRACY NGUYEN
OPTOMETRY



**MIYU
ODA-DESHOTELS**
COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO



**JASON
PAGUIO**
ASIAN BUSINESS
ASSOCIATION



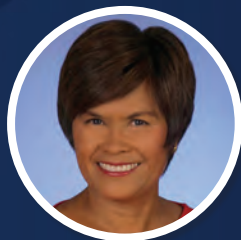
**LIANA
PHAM-YEE**
RADY CHILDREN'S
HEALTH SAN DIEGO



**ANN MARIE
PRICE**
SCATENA MEDIA GROUP



**ALENN
REBOLLEDO**
LILY PROPERTY
CONCIERGE



**DARLYNNE
REYES MENKIN**
WHERE YOU WANT TO BE
TOURS, INC. & OUT OF THE
ORDINARY



**VASU
SAMBASIVAM**
CALIFORNIA COAST
CREDIT UNION



**AARON
SATO**
SAN DIEGO COUNTY
CREDIT UNION



**SITARA
SETHI**
FOUNDATION FOR
DEVELOPMENTAL
DISABILITIES



**AJIT
SINGH**
MIDLAND CREDIT
MANAGEMENT, INC.



**REBECCA
SMITH**
W2 SAN DIEGO



**LEILANI
SOOTO-SAMO A**
PRIDESTAFF CARLSBAD



**EDEN
SOSA**
TRUECARE



**WENDY
URUSHIMA-CONN**
UPAC



**NAVEEN
WAN EY**
PLATT/WHITE LAW
ARCHITECTS, INC.



**JOHN
WONG**
RADY CHILDREN'S
HEALTH SAN DIEGO



**DR. RAY
WU**
FOLEY & LARDNER LLP

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MELISSA BARTOLOME

DEPUTY DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF EQUITY & RACIAL JUSTICE, COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

Melissa is a lifelong San Diegan, proud Filipina, and devoted mother with 28 years of service to the County of San Diego. A trusted equity advocate, she has strengthened partnerships with Filipino and underserved communities, elevating representation, building community trust, and advancing inclusive policies through authentic, community-centered leadership.



CHARLES BAYANI

FOUNDER & CEO
THE PAYMENT HQ

Charles Bayani is the Founder & CEO of The Payment HQ - San Diego's most trusted merchant services firm. A 14-year industry veteran, award-winning former VP at Wells Fargo, and 2026 San Diego Business Journal CEO of the Year finalist, he built the company he always believed small businesses deserved - one rooted in transparency, trust, and real partnership.



SOPHIA BROD

DIRECTOR, OPERATIONS
ID STUDIOS, INC.

Sophia Brod is Director of Operations at ID Studios, bringing 20 years of experience in business operations and finance. During her 15 years with the firm, she has shaped strategic, HR, and operational initiatives while championing a collaborative, inclusive workplace culture.



SHEILAH BUACK-SHELTON

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
REDWOOD PUBLIC LAW

Sheilah Buack-Shelton is the Executive Director of Redwood Public Law and Founder of Visioncraft Strategy Partners. An award-winning leader recognized as Businesswoman of the Year in Orange County and San Diego, she drives operational excellence and financial strategy while serving communities to enhance civic life and strengthen public institutions.



HOWARD CHAN

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, INNOVATION HUB
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN MARCOS

From Silicon Valley to the classroom, Howard brings over 30 years of cross-sector work spanning industry, workforce development, and education. He holds degrees in Electrical Engineering and Teaching and has championed education models worldwide, influencing educators and students through creative, hands-on experiences and an entrepreneurial mindset.



VALERIE GARCIA HONG

PRINCIPAL ATTORNEY
GARCIA HONG LAW

Valerie Garcia Hong is a pillar in the Asian Pacific legal as a director for the San Diego Asian Legal Community Education Fund, the Filipino American Chamber of Commerce of the Greater San Diego and of Pag-Asa Legal Clinic. She is also current president of the Women of Color in Law.



MICHELLE GASTIL

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT
SAN DIEGO COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION

Michelle Gastil is the Immediate Past President of the San Diego County Bar Association. She is Senior Staff Counsel at the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC). Before joining DTSC, she practiced as a solo attorney from 2015 to 2022, handling consumer debt, business disputes, and environmental matters.



DR. LYSA HO

LEAD PHYSICIAN
TRUECARE

Dr. Lysa Ho, DO, is a Lead Physician at TrueCare specializing in internal medicine, women's health, and hospital medicine. She has strengthened care access in Ramona through clinical leadership, program expansion, and securing funding to support high-quality care for underserved communities.

Honored. Driven. Just Getting Started.

Being named AAPI Leader of Influence by the San Diego Business Journal means more than I can put into a single page. It reflects 14 years in the payments industry, and a first-generation Filipino who bet on himself.

Before starting The Payment HQ, I spent over a decade at Wells Fargo rising to VP — and I walked away because I knew business owners deserved better. Clear pricing. Connected systems. Support from someone who actually knows your setup.

This recognition belongs to the clients who trusted us, the team that shows up every day, and every business owner who expects more from the people they partner with.



Charles Bayani
Founder - The Payment HQ

Payment systems built for your business.

If you've ever felt like your payment system was working against you — we should talk.



858-345-6900

info@thepaymenthq.com



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DAN HOM
PRESIDENT
FOCUSCOM INC.

Dan Hom has more than 30 years of community involvement, business experience and international expertise. As the President of Focuscom, his responsibilities include driving business development, as well as managing and providing strategy for clients.



JULIE HOUTH
ATTORNEY
RUEB STOLLER DANIEL

Julie is an Attorney at Rueb Stoller Daniel practicing complex litigation with a focus on consumer protection and mass torts. She has experience in various practice areas including tax litigation, maritime law litigation, and complex litigation, with a focus on consumer protection, mass torts, class actions and multi-district litigation.



LAMBERT HSU
FOUNDER & CEO
BENEFIT PRO INSURANCE

Lambert Hsu founded Benefit Pro in 2001, successfully building the organization into a thriving, "new generation" benefits agency. Today, Benefit Pro is known as one of the top independent insurance agencies in San Diego and recognized by Inc. Magazine as a recipient of the 2026 Best Workplaces Award.



JESSICA JAVIER
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
ASIAN BUSINESS ASSOCIATION SAN DIEGO

Jessica Javier is a San Diego native and Business Advisor with the San Diego Small Business Development Center, where she has helped over 200 businesses thrive this year alone. A proud Asian professional with 6+ years of experience, she also serves the Asian Business Association of San Diego and is a published author of *Some Bunny Loves You* and a passionate advocate for the small business community.

Recognizing Leadership



Foley & Lardner LLP proudly congratulates **Ray Wu** on being recognized among the Asian Pacific Islander Leaders of 2026.

For more information about Foley, please contact:

Ray Wu | Associate
ray.wu@foley.com

FOLEY.COM



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KRISTINE LEE

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSOCIATE
RADY CHILDREN'S HEALTH SAN DIEGO

An administrative associate at RCHSD, she supports the Chiefs of Cardiology and Interventional Radiology. Born and raised in San Diego by Asian immigrants, she values community and connection. She proudly serves as Vice President of the AANHPI employee resource group and enjoys cooking and baking for loved ones.



SANDEEP MOR

SVP, CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT
SEMPRA

Sandeep Mor is senior vice president, corporate development of Sempra. He is responsible for Sempra's long-term strategy and corporate development functions. Mor actively collaborates with Sempra's business platforms in support of their growth strategy and M&A activities.



DR. TINA NGO BARTEL

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
SAN DIEGO & IMPERIAL CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

A first-generation American and daughter of Vietnamese refugees, Dr. Tina Ngo Bartel leads regional research, strategy, and workforce initiatives for 10 San Diego & Imperial Community Colleges. She also serves on the Civic Communities board, guiding \$77M+ in investments that support housing, small business growth, and economic mobility.



MYAN NGUYEN

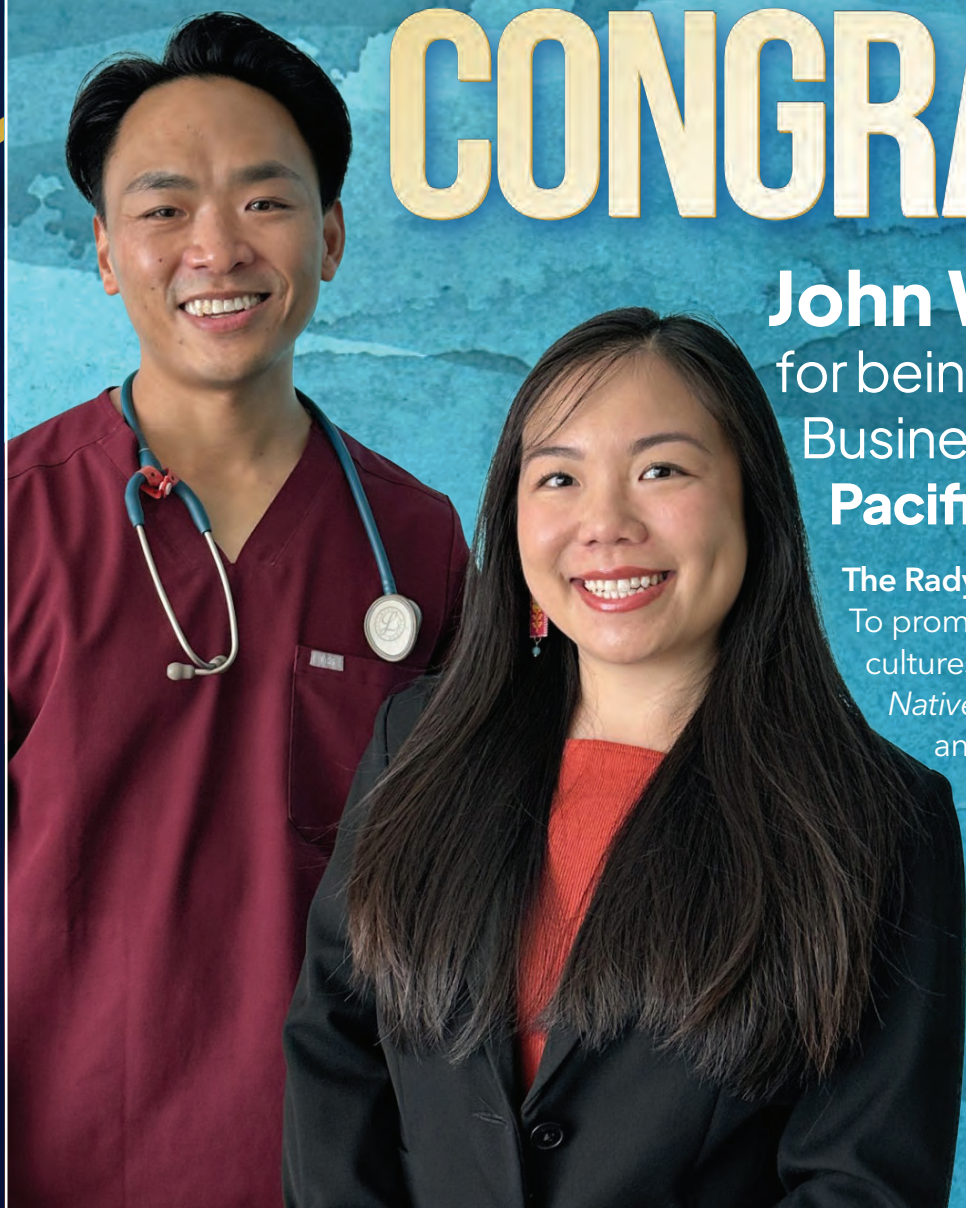
CO-FOUNDER & VP, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
NETBINC CORPORATION

Myan is a 20-year-old entrepreneur, San Diego State University student, and Co-Founder of Netbinc - a social commerce platform built to help people discover hidden gems in their cities while empowering local small businesses to grow. She also mentors marketing interns, supporting the next generation of San Diego's business leaders.

CONGRATULATIONS

John Wong and Kristine Lee
for being named Finalists for the San Diego Business Journal's **2026 Asian American Pacific Islander Leaders of Influence.**

The Rady Children's Team Resource Group's (TRG) mission is: To promote awareness and understanding of the unique and diverse cultures within our community and ensure that AANHPI (Asian American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander) community members are heard and elevated.



Rady Children's Health

rchsd.org

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DR. TRACY NGUYEN, O.D.
OPTOMETRIST
DR. TRACY NGUYEN OPTOMETRY

Dr. Tracy Nguyen is an optometrist, proud first-generation refugee, and passionate advocate for women in engineering. As President of Society of Women Engineers - San Diego Professional, she leads initiatives focused on mentorship, professional development, and building strong industry connections that support women at every stage of their careers.



MIYU ODA-DESHOTELS
COMMUNITY ADVOCATE, LEGISLATIVE STAFFER & GRANT WRITER
COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

Miyu Oda-Deshotels oversees complex constituent casework, works with local, state, and federal agencies, and helps residents navigate housing, healthcare, land use, public safety, and social service challenges. Outside of public service, Miyu is a grant writer for Heartbeat Music and Performing Arts Academy.



JASON PAGUIO
PRESIDENT & CEO
ASIAN BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

Jason Paguio leads the Asian Business Association San Diego and the Asian Business Association Foundation. He also chairs the California Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander American Affairs; served on the California Entrepreneurship & Economic Mobility Task Force; and was appointed by Mayor Gloria to the City of San Diego Small Business Advisory Board and the Asian Pacific Islander Advisory Group.



LIANA PHAM-YEE
SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST II
RADY CHILDREN'S HEALTH SAN DIEGO

Liana, a bilingual Spanish-speaking speech-language pathologist, has worked at Rady Children's since 2019. She is a member of the Cleft Palate and Cochlear Implant teams and is actively involved in the AANHPI employee resource group.

Congratulations to

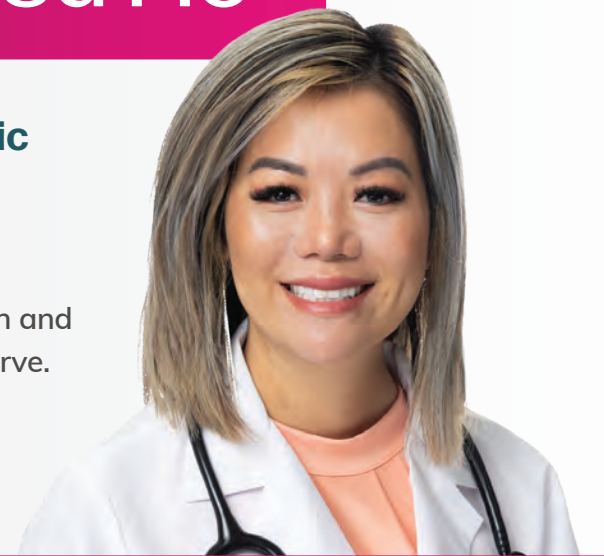
Eden Sosa and Dr. Lysa Ho

Named 2026 Asian American Pacific Islander Leaders of Influence
by the *San Diego Business Journal*

This recognition reflects your leadership, compassion and commitment to the people and communities we serve.



Eden Sosa, MBA
Corporate Compliance and Contracts Officer



Lysa Ho, DO
Lead Physician, Ramona Health Center



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truecare.org

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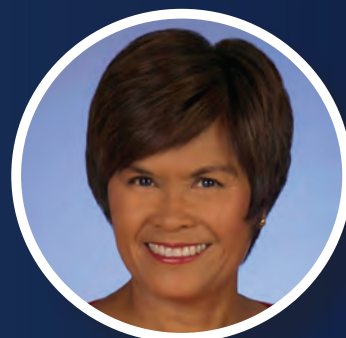
ANN MARIE PRICE
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC RELATIONS
SCATENA MEDIA GROUP

Ann Marie Price is the Director of Public Relations for Scatena Media Group, an integrated communications agency. She has served as Board Secretary for the SD Association of Black Journalists for over five years. A native San Diegan, she received her B.A. in journalism from San Diego State University.



ALENN REBOLLEDO
CEO
LILY PROPERTY CONCIERGE

Entrepreneur focused on redefining modern living. Harvard background with experience at Apple, Intuit, Qualcomm, Northrop Grumman, and the County of San Diego. Helped launch a widely distributed soju brand and is pioneering hotel-level standards in residential property care.



DARLYNNE REYES MENKIN
PRESIDENT/OWNER, WHERE YOU WANT TO BE TOURS, INC. & OUT OF THE ORDINARY

Darlynn Reyes Menkin is President and Owner of Where You Want to Be Tours, Inc. and Out of the Ordinary, two award-winning companies that design and facilitate team building & wellness programs and curated tour experiences.



VASU SAMBASIVAM
CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER
CALIFORNIA COAST CREDIT UNION

Vasu Sambasivam is Chief Information Officer at California Coast Credit Union, a \$3.5 billion San Diego based institution. With more than 25 years of banking and credit union leadership, he leads core banking modernization and digital, AI powered innovation focused on security, member experience, and community impact.



CONGRATULATIONS

Wendy Urushima-Conn

UPAC PRESIDENT & CEO

On being named an
SDBJ: AAPI Leader of Influence for 2026.
Thank you for your commitment to our communities, contributions, advocacy, & exemplary leadership!

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2026 upcoming LISTS & SPECIAL REPORTS

JUNE 1

LIST: CRE Mgmt Co's / General Contractors

SPECIAL REPORT: CRE Map - Downtown

JUNE 8

LIST: CROs / CMOs

SPECIAL REPORT: Balboa Park Museums

JUNE 15

LIST: Architecture Firms

SPECIAL REPORT: Architecture

JUNE 22

LIST: Senior Care Facilities

SPECIAL REPORT: Healthcare

JUNE 29

LIST: Auto Dealers

SPECIAL REPORT: Auto

JULY 6

LIST: Law Firms

SPECIAL REPORT: Law

JULY 13

LIST: Permanent / Temporary Placement Firms / Employee Benets Providers

SPECIAL REPORT: Workforce

JULY 20

LIST: RRE # of 2025 Transactions

SPECIAL REPORT: Residential Real Estate

JULY 27

LIST: Credit Unions

SPECIAL REPORT: Banking

August 3

LIST: Technology Solution Providers/ SaaS Co's / Clean Tech Co's

SPECIAL REPORT: Technology

AUGUST 10

LIST: CRE Brokers / Largest Office / Industrial / Retail Parks / Wealth Mgmt firms

SPECIAL REPORT: CRE South County

August 17

LIST: Military Bases

SPECIAL REPORT: Military Leadership

To be on the list or for more information please contact: sdbjlists@sdbj.com

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AARON SATO

EVP & CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER
SAN DIEGO COUNTY CREDIT UNION

Aaron Sato is EVP and CFO at SDCCU, leading financial strategy, risk management, and strategic planning. With over 30 years' experience, he is skilled at improving performance and driving growth. Previously CFO at San Francisco Fire Credit Union and Finance Factors, he is a CPA and University of Hawaii graduate.



SITARA SETHI

CEO
FOUNDATION FOR DEVELOPMENTAL
DISABILITIES

Sitara Sethi is the Chief Executive Officer of the Foundation for Developmental Disabilities, where she provides strategic leadership for one of the region's most impactful organizations advancing equity and opportunity for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities across San Diego and Imperial Counties.



AJIT SINGH

CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER
MIDLAND CREDIT MANAGEMENT, INC.

With over 25 years of global experience, Ajit brings a strategic, people-first approach to leadership that drives business transformation and organizational excellence. He currently serves as Chief People Officer at Midland Credit Management, an Encore Capital Group company where he leads HR for 4,400 employees across three countries.



REBECCA SMITH

PRESIDENT & CEO
W2 SAN DIEGO

Rebecca leads W2 San Diego, a startup founded by Mary Walshok and Buzz Woolley for students to discover meaningful, sustainable careers in our region. Rebecca's experience - from facilitating leadership programs to establishing academic internships - includes working with High Tech High, Qualcomm, Manpower, San Diego Workforce Partnership, University of San Diego.



LEILANI SOOTO-SAMOA

BRANCH MANAGER
PRIDESTAFF CARLSBAD

Leilani Sooto-Samoa's visionary leadership is the cornerstone of PrideStaff Carlsbad's meteoric rise. Fostering excellence and accountability, she transformed this office into a market leader and 2026 New Office of the Year. Her relentless dedication to client success also earned the branch recognition as a top Net Promoter Score leader system-wide.



EDEN SOSA

CORPORATE COMPLIANCE
& CONTRACTS OFFICE
TRUECARE

Eden Sosa, MBA, is TrueCare's Corporate Compliance & Contracts Officer and designated HIPAA/Privacy Officer. She brings deep FQHC, legal, and operational expertise, and helped lead key HRSA and FTCA milestones that strengthen ethical, compliant care for underserved communities in San Diego County.



WENDY URUSHIMA-CONN

PRESIDENT & CEO
UPAC

With over 30 years of experience in community outreach, fundraising, marketing, and public relations, Urushima-Conn leads the Union of Pan Asian Communities (UPAC), a multicultural behavioral health organization providing services in over 30 languages. Her work emphasizes advancing access to critical resources and programs that empower diverse communities.



NAVEEN WANEY

SENIOR PRINCIPAL & OWNER
PLATT/WHITELAW ARCHITECTS, INC.

Naveen Waney's successful architectural career spans 40+ years. He is an award-winning, Indian-American architect who has extensive experience in public-sector and community-facing projects. He was Chair of the Clairemont Community Planning Group for several years and has spent years mentoring young architects through the ACE Mentor program.



JOHN WONG

CLINICAL NURSE (CN III), INFUSION CENTER
RADY CHILDREN'S HEALTH SAN DIEGO

John, a Philadelphia native from a Chinese immigrant family, worked in his family's restaurant during his school years. With 15 years in pediatric nursing at RCHSD, he is passionate about elevating equity and inclusion in healthcare.



DR. RAY WU

ASSOCIATE
FOLEY & LARDNER LLP

Dr. Ray Wu is an intellectual property attorney focusing on cross-border patent prosecution, PTAB inter partes reviews, and high stakes patent litigation. With deep technical training, semiconductor industry experience, and a record supporting startups and global companies, he delivers strategic, solutions-oriented counsel on complex IP challenges across jurisdictions worldwide.