

# Two Kern County attorneys nationally recognized

BY MAUREEN STRODE  
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Of the 100 leading lawyers recognized by U.S. News & World Report's *The Best Lawyers in America 2020* edition, only two Kern County attorneys were represented.

Attorneys James Yoro and David Cohn, both partners and veteran attorneys at Chain Cohn Stiles, were recognized by one of the United States' most honored and respected attorney-ranking systems.

Yoro and Cohn, both Bakersfield natives, stayed in the area after they received their law degrees. Cohn began practicing law in 1976, and Yoro began in 1979,

and the entirety of their careers has been at Chain Cohn Stiles.

Their careers have impacted the Kern County community in a positive light — and they continue to make great strides in helping others.

## 'A MORE POSITIVE AND SAFER ENVIRONMENT'

Cohn saw practicing law as a way to help others in need.

His uncle, Milt Younger, was a local lawyer who practiced personal injury



Cohn



Yoro

law. The work he did inspired Cohn to follow in his footsteps, he said.

"Personal injury just seemed to be an area where I knew I could help the everyday person against insurance companies and big corporations," Cohn said.

Since then, Cohn's career has flourished, and he's been able to create positive change in the community through litigation. Cohn, for example, represented the young son of James

Moore, who died as a result of a severe beating in the Kern County Jail in 2006. Moore was mentally ill.

Cohn said he was able to establish in court that deputies from the Kern County Sheriff's Office used excessive force on Moore.

"We were able to obtain a significant settlement against the (Sheriff's Office) for Moore's son," Cohn said, noting that two deputies were also convicted and sent to prison for the beating. "Following the completion of the case, the (Sheriff's Office) reviewed and revised their procedures for how to handle mentally ill detainees in jail.

"These types of changes, I hope, create a more positive and safer environment

for the public."

## REPRESENTING THE AVERAGE WORKING PERSON

Yoro has been managing Chain Cohn Stiles' workers' compensation practice full time for about 30 years. The firm has a long-standing tradition of representing injured workers, he said.

In his 30 years, Yoro has argued cases before the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and before the California Supreme Court. But one of the most inspirational cases he's worked was a disability case he won for a farmworker who worked all his life in the fields.

Yoro said the man would have been destitute without the benefits he won in

the lawsuit.

"After the hearing was over and I told him that the judge had ruled in his favor, he and his family hugged me and said to me in Spanish, 'gracias por darnos esperanza,'" meaning "thank you for giving us hope" in English, Yoro said. "As a lawyer, you can never take for granted the impact or influence you can have on someone's life."

Yoro appreciates how Chain Cohn Stiles represents the average working man and woman.

"We don't represent big corporations or insurance companies," Yoro said. "That guiding principle has always served our mission statement. Our clients deserve the best representation we can give them."

## TODAY IN HISTORY

**1776:** The second Continental Congress made the term "United States" official, replacing "United Colonies."

**1850:** California became the 31st state of the union.

**1942:** During World War II, a Japanese plane launched from a submarine off the Oregon coast dropped a pair of incendiary bombs in a failed attempt at igniting a massive forest fire; it was the first aerial bombing of the U.S. mainland by a foreign power.

**1943:** Allied forces landed at Salerno and Taranto during World War II.

**1948:** The People's Democratic Republic of Korea (North Korea) was declared.

**1956:** Elvis Presley made the first of three appearances on "The Ed Sullivan Show."

**1960:** In the first regular-season American Football League game, the Denver Broncos defeated the Boston Patriots, 13-10.

**1971:** Prisoners seized control of the maximum-security Attica Correctional Facility near Buffalo, New York, beginning a siege that ended up claiming 43 lives.

**1986:** Frank Reed, director of a private school in Lebanon, was taken hostage; he was released 44 months later.

**1991:** Boxer Mike Tyson was indicted in Indianapolis on a charge of raping Desiree Washington, a beauty pageant contestant. (Tyson was convicted and ended up serving three years of a six-year prison sentence.)

**1997:** Sinn Fein, the IRA's political ally, formally renounced violence as it took its place in talks on Northern Ireland's future. Actor Burgess Meredith died in Malibu at age 89.

**2005:** Federal Emergency Management Agency Director Michael Brown, the principal target of harsh criticism of the Bush administration's response to Hurricane Katrina, was relieved of his onsite command.

**2013:** Four days of vehicular gridlock began near the George Washington Bridge when two of three approach lanes from Fort Lee, New Jersey, were blocked off; the traffic jam was later blamed on loyalists to New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie over the refusal of Fort Lee Mayor Mark Sokolich to endorse Christie for re-election. (Christie denied any prior knowledge of the lane closures.)

— The Associated Press

## LOTTERY NUMBERS

**Saturday's Powerball** 11 20 41 42 56 6  
Next jackpot: \$50 million

**Friday's Mega Millions** 4 11 13 19 31 10  
Next jackpot: \$154 million

**Saturday's SuperLotto** 8 18 20 23 43 5  
Next jackpot: \$9 million

**Daily 3** MIDDAY: 5 9 4 EVENING: 1 3 5

**Daily 4:** 9 0 1 3 **Fantasy 5:** 2 4 8 16 39

**Daily Derby** HORSES: 10 11 3 RACE TIME: 1:47.21

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# Bakersfield City Council to consider options to address homeless issues

BY SAM MORGEN  
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City staff will brief the Bakersfield City Council on efforts the city is taking to mitigate homelessness during its Wednesday meeting.

Among potential options the city may implement to address the growing issue is the use of private security in areas of the city with the highest property crimes and the hiring of a team to clean up human waste downtown.

In a report to the council, the City Manager's Office said a variety of responses would be necessary to deal with a rising homelessness crisis.

An annual survey of Kern County's homeless population, known as the point-in-time count, revealed 1,330 homeless individuals within the county in January, with 80 percent residing in metro Bakersfield.

The number represented a 50 percent increase in homelessness compared to the same count the previous year.

Of those counted, 643 were unsheltered.

To deal with complaints of residents and businesses related to homelessness, the city has already implemented several mitigation measures.

Three "rapid response" teams have been formed to quickly handle cleanup efforts related to homelessness and vandalism. Using new employees hired as a result of the funds provided by the recent 1 percent sales tax increase, the teams typi-

cally respond within a day to complaints generated by citizens.

The city has also provided funds for 40 new beds at both the Bakersfield Homeless Center and the Mission at Kern County.

But the council will consider additional options at its next meeting.

Two of those options include the hiring of private entities to take on issues that have been the frequent subject of complaints over the last few months.

One initiative that could be taken on would see the city enter into contract with a professional cleaning service or with the "Clean Team" that operates through the Bakersfield Homeless Center to clean up downtown areas that have been dirtied by, among other things, human feces.

The city says recent complaints regarding the waste have been made, and the new contract would address such issues.

Numerous businesses have reported break-ins and vandalism in events that have been widely publicized. In the latest example, Luigi's was broken into last Tuesday and sprayed with a fire extinguisher.

To combat thefts and burglaries in areas that have been frequently targeted, the Bakersfield Police Department could deploy private security details for patrols.

The department has already been exploring its ability to use crime data to direct the security details.



CALIFORNIAN FILE

**In this file photo, Downtown Street Ambassador Shawn McConnell cleans up the downtown area of Bakersfield.**

The City Council would need to approve both contracts before the city moves forward with them.

No cost estimate was included in the city's report to the council.

The City Manager's Office recommended the council approve the measures.

The council will also hear an update on the City Manager's Office's plan to install a low-barrier shelter somewhere in the city. A total of \$4 million has already been approved for the shelter, which would provide housing for homeless individuals who otherwise cannot stay at other shelters in Bakersfield.

However, the city has yet to identify a location for the site, according to the report.

You can reach Sam Morgen at 661-395-7415. You may also follow him on Twitter @smorgenTBC.

## IF YOU GO

**What:** Bakersfield City Council meeting  
**When:** 5:15 p.m., Wednesday

**Where:** 1501 Truxtun Ave.  
**Cost:** Free of charge

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