



Robert H. Thomas
Director Emeritus



Education

Columbia University School of Law, Harlan Fiske Stone Scholar (LL.M. 1995)

University of Hawaii, William S. Richardson School of Law (J.D.1987)

University of Santa Clara (B.S. 1984)

Blog

www.inversecondemnation.com

For more than thirty years (between 1987 and 2021, and when he retired from the firm and private practice and joined [Pacific Legal Foundation](#) – a non-profit legal foundation dedicated to protecting property rights and individual liberties), Robert was a Damon Key land use and appellate lawyer focusing on regulatory takings, eminent domain, water rights, and voting rights cases. With the firm he tried cases and appeals in Hawaii, California, and the federal courts. For a list of reported cases in which he was involved, go [here](#).

Although he no longer practices law with the firm, we remain close friends with our emeritus colleagues such as Robert, and are proud of our history together.

An elected member of the [American Law Institute](#), Robert received his LLM, with honors, from Columbia Law School where he was a Harlan Fiske Stone Scholar, and his JD from the University of Hawaii School of Law where he served as editor of the Law Review. He is the inaugural Joseph T. Waldo Visiting Chair in Property Rights Law at [William & Mary Law School](#) in Williamsburg, Virginia, where he continues to teach upper-division courses in eminent domain, land use, property rights, and property law. He also recently completed a year as the Chair of the American Bar Association's Section of State & Local Government Law, and was the long-time Chair of the Section's Eminent Domain Law Committee. He also has served as the Editor-in-Chief of the Section's scholarly legal journal on municipal law issues, [The Urban Lawyer](#).

Prior to leaving private practice, Robert was the Hawaii member of [Owners' Counsel of America](#), a national network of the most experienced eminent domain and property rights lawyers. Membership in OCA is by invitation only, and is limited to a single attorney from each state. He is also the Co-Planning Chair of the [American Law Institute-CLE's](#) long-standing three-day national conference on condemnation law, [Eminent Domain and Land Valuation Litigation](#), now in its 39th year.

While with the firm, Robert was repeatedly selected by his peers for inclusion in the Best Lawyers in America lists in the fields of Eminent Domain & Condemnation Law, Land Use & Zoning Law, Litigation-Land Use & Zoning, and Real Estate Law. He was Best Lawyers' Lawyer of the Year 2019 for Litigation – Land Use & Zoning, 2018 and 2014 Lawyer of the Year for Eminent Domain & Condemnation Law, and 2017 Lawyer of the Year in Land

Use & Zoning Law. Robert was also listed in Super Lawyers for many years in in Appellate Law, Land Use/Zoning, and Government/Cities/Municipalities. Robert also taught law at the University of Santa Clara School of Law, and was an exam grader and screener for the California Committee of Bar Examiners.

He was (and continues to be) a [frequent speaker](#) on land use and eminent domain issues in Hawaii and nationwide. Robert regularly publishes scholarly and practical articles in his area of practice. For a partial list, go [here](#). His blog on land use, property, and takings law, inversecondemnation.com, is one of the most widely-read blogs on those subjects.

Land Use Law blog
inversecondemnation.com

Professional and Community Affiliations

- [American Law Institute](#) – Elected Member
- American Bar Association – Chair Section of State and Local Government Law (2017-18); Past Chair, Eminent Domain Law Committee (Section of State & Local Government Law) (2009-2016); Council of Appellate Lawyers; Litigation Section, Committee on Condemnation, Zoning and Land use (Hawaii editor, Case Notes)
- State Bar of California
- Hawaii State Bar Association

Bar Admissions

- California
- Hawaii
- U.S. Supreme Court
- U.S. Court of Appeals (Third, Fourth, Ninth, Eleventh, and Federal Circuits)
- U.S. District Court (Hawaii and Northern District of California)
- U.S. Court of Federal Claims, U.S. Tax Court



