



News

Many of our engagements involve matters in which our clients face significant public attention. The following is a list of news stories about the firm, our clients, cases and the results we have achieved.

Propel Fuels Wins 2026 Impact Case Award from Benchmark Litigation

March 12, 2026

California renewable fuels pioneer Propel Fuels, Inc. has been named winner of a 2026 Impact Case Award in recognition of its groundbreaking \$833 million legal victory against oil major Phillips 66 Company. The prize, announced at Benchmark Litigation's gala ceremony on March 11, 2026 in New York City, is bestowed on "the most significant cases of the year," including consideration of the broader social and business impact of the matter.

The case arose from Phillips 66's terminated acquisition of Propel in 2018, and Phillips 66's misuse of confidential information acquired under NDA to immediately launch a new renewable fuels business that quickly grew to a multi-billion-dollar operation. Propel brought suit in California state court for trade secret misappropriation, and fought through a multi-year pretrial process to bring the case to trial in October 2024. Following a grueling five-week trial, the jury awarded Propel \$604.9 million in compensatory damages, an amount increased to \$833 million in 2025 with the court's additional award of interest and \$195 in enhanced (punitive) damages in a detailed order concluding that "Phillips 66's misconduct was 'reprehensible' from a business perspective."

"Even before Propel won in court, the company's willingness to stand up for its own rights against a much larger, well-funded adversary was widely seen as sending a warning across corporate America not to exploit entrepreneurial innovators like Propel," said company founder and CEO Rob Elam. "Our company and the people who built it stood strong and were never willing to give in. We are proud of the Propel team, who are champions of the rights of innovators everywhere."

"We commend Propel on this richly deserved award," said Kobre & Kim's Michael Ng, who served as co-lead counsel. "Throughout this process, Rob and rest of the Propel leadership kept their eye on the bigger picture, and instilled in their team the tenacity and confidence it takes to win."

Propel's case against Phillips 66 has received widespread attention in the business and legal communities, standing as a warning against misuse of confidential information obtained in mergers, acquisitions, joint ventures and other transactions. The \$833 million judgment stands as one of the top five trade secret outcomes in history.

Kobre & Kim was also shortlisted in multiple categories at this year's Benchmark Litigation Awards, including nominations as California and New York litigation firms of the year, with Michael Ng recognized as a finalist for Intellectual Property Litigator of the Year for 2026.