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City Attorney John Russo Named "California Lawyer of the Year"

Oakland, CA – In its March issue, *California Lawyer* Magazine named Oakland City Attorney John Russo as Attorney of the Year for Government/Public Policy. The eighth annual prestigious CLAY (California Lawyer Attorneys of the Year) Awards for 2003 honored 34 attorneys in 13 separate fields who had a significant impact on the law.

The CLAY Award recognized City Attorney Russo for his advocacy and innovation in public law while saving taxpayer money. "As lead defense counsel for the city of Oakland, Russo settled a civil suit alleging widespread police misconduct for \$10.8 million, only \$2.2 million of which came from taxpayers, with the rest paid by excess insurers. Despite this payout, he managed to reduce city spending on lawyers and lawsuits by \$3.5 million compared with the previous fiscal year.

"On the local level, Russo's innovative, privately funded Neighborhood Law Corps helped overcome blight by, among other things, entering an agreement with Union Pacific Railroad to clean up illegally dumped trash along railroad tracks, which will save the city hundreds of thousands of dollars in cleanup costs over the ten-year period of the agreement."

The award also recognized Russo for winning an appellate ruling upholding the city's anti-predatory lending ordinance and successfully petitioning California Insurance Commissioner John Garamendi to investigate ZIP Code discrimination in auto insurance.

"There are some achievements made by California lawyers that have such far-reaching impact that they cannot go unrecognized," said the magazine's editors. "The lawyers selected as Attorneys of the Year for 2003 substantially influenced public policy or a particular industry, brought about a significant development in their field of practice or in law-firm management, or achieved a notable victory for a client or for the public in a difficult, high-stakes matter."