Estate and Trust Services

WINDES

AUDIT | TAX | ADVISORY

Our Signature Story

Since 1926, we have been a trusted partner to our clients and have earned our reputation as one of the most respected and socially responsible accounting firms in southern California. Our professionals deliver high-value accounting and consulting services and are committed to our clients. The strength of our practice and comprehensive expertise, coupled with our global network, enables us to provide our clients with solutions focused on their continued success at fees that represent outstanding value. Windes covers a multitude of disciplines with more than 200 professionals within three southern California offices. Our firm serves over 4,000 businesses and more than 3,900 individuals.

The Windes Difference

- We are a leader in the estate and trust services area, with more experience than any other firm in our market space.
- We have prepared hundreds of estate and trust tax returns and thousands of fiduciary income tax returns.
- Tax Partner, Donita Joseph, is a recognized expert and has spoken for both the California Society of Certified Public Accountants (CalCPA) Education Foundation and Spidell Publications in the estate and trust area.
- Donita is the former Chair of the State Committee on Estate Planning for CalCPA.
- We have over fifty years of combined experience and expertise in the estate and trust area, including a senior manager with a Juris Doctor, who has an extensive estate planning background.
- Local technical and engagement decision-making is made with significant partner involvement.
- Strong client relationships: Our clients stay with us and, as a result, relationships last for many years.
- Acknowledged by *INSIDE Public Accounting (IPA)* as one of the top “25 Best of the Best” accounting firms in the country, listed as one of *IPA’s* “All-Star Firms for Long-Range Planning,” and ranked among *IPA’s* “Top 200 Accounting Firms” in the nation.
- Motivated and hard-working staff: Consistently ranked as one of the “Best Firms to Work For” in the country by *Accounting Today and* a “Best Places to Work” in Los Angeles and Orange Counties by the *Los Angeles* and *Orange County Business Journals,* respectively

Highlighted Expertise

Working closely with our client referral network of trust companies, attorneys, accountants, financial planners, and chartered life underwriters, Windes is able to provide a broad spectrum of customized services for clients. We believe successful business and personal financial planning includes the creation and orderly transfer of wealth. Let us help you use the tax laws to your advantage.

Our Estate and Trust Services include:

- Estate and Business Succession Planning that Focuses on the Creation of Wealth and the Interrelationship of Estate, Fiduciary, Business, and Personal Taxes. We can assist you with the tools necessary to maximize the transfer of your wealth to your heirs through tax-efficient strategies without sacrificing your ability to enjoy the wealth you have built over the years.

- Preparation of Federal Estate Tax Returns and Gift Tax Returns. We have extensive experience in the preparation of complex estate and gift tax returns. We have developed our expertise over the years by preparing hundreds of these returns and maintaining our proficiency through specialized education and training.

- Preparation of Estate and Trust Income Tax Returns. We have the expertise in this specialized area that few accounting firms have the opportunity to develop. Correctly preparing fiduciary income tax returns requires a thorough understanding of federal and state income tax laws, as well as the state probate code, Uniform Principal and Income Act, and federal estate tax law. The preparer must not only understand how these laws affect the estate or trust, but also how they affect the beneficiaries.

- Postmortem Tax Planning. The Estate and Trust Group provides a number of services in this area. These include reviewing the will and trust instruments in order to determine whether there are any potential tax problems that need to be addressed, understanding and implementing the use of disclaimers, analyzing the optimum usage of the Qualified Terminal Interest Property (QTIP) election, optimizing the allocation of the Generation Skipping Transfer Tax (GSTT) exemption, and allocating assets to various subtrusts established at the death of the first spouse.

- Preparation of Estate Court Accountings and Trust Accountings to Beneficiaries. The preparation of fiduciary accountings involves a thorough understanding of the Uniform Principal and Income Act, as well as a strong accounting background. The Estate and Trust Group has over 40 years combined experience in preparing trust, estate, and conservatorship accountings.

- Assistance in Trust Litigation Matters and Beneficiary Disputes. Our extensive experience in preparing fiduciary accountings gives us the ability to provide the consultation services needed to resolve trust litigation matters and beneficiary disputes.

- Assistance to a Surviving Spouse or Other Heirs. The loss of a spouse or other loved one is a difficult time for clients. Many need extra assistance in organizing their financial affairs, especially if the decedent handled all the financial affairs before death. We can provide the required level of assistance based upon the surviving spouse's or other heir's abilities to handle financial and other estate or trust matters.

The Estate and Trust Practice Leadership

Donita M. Joseph, CPA, MBT

Partner, Estate, Trust and Nonprofit Services
djoseph@windes.com

- 25+ years of estate and trust experience and heads the firm's Estate and Trust Practice
- Specializes in estate and gift tax returns, fiduciary income tax, estate and postmortem planning, charitable trust and private foundation planning and returns, trust and estate administration and accounting, income tax planning for individuals, and nonprofit tax returns
- Former Chair of the State Committee on Estate Planning for CalCPA
- Member AICPA Trust, Estate, and Gift Tax Technical Resource Panel

Kevin H. Wiest, CPA, MST

Partner, Estate, Trust and Nonprofit Services
kwiest@windes.com

- 20 years of estate and trust experience
- Specializes in helping high-net-worth individuals and their families minimize taxes
- Extensive knowledge of individual income tax, estate and transfer taxes, fiduciary income tax, gift tax, generation skipping transfer tax, as well as postmortem planning, and estate and trust administration
- Expertise in fiduciary accountings prepared for trusts and estates and filed with courts of law supporting mediation and litigation where beneficiary disputes have arisen