

Contact

Bart H. Williams

Partner

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Bart Williams is one of the nation's most sought after trial lawyers and commercial litigators. A Fellow of The American College of Trial Lawyers, Bart represents Fortune 500 companies as lead counsel in their most challenging and high-profile cases and investigations. *Benchmark Litigation* has given Bart its highest ranking, "National Litigation Star," since 2017. Bart is one of only five lawyers in California to receive *Chambers USA's* highest ranking, "Star Individual," for Commercial Litigation. *Chambers* ranks Bart Band 1 in its national Trial Lawyer rankings.

Bart represents clients in numerous industries, including: sports, media and entertainment, financial services, consumer products, technology and telecommunications, pharmaceutical, and private equity. He has represented multiple major law firms in their most serious professional negligence cases. He has also represented celebrities, government officials and corporate executives individually in high-stakes matters.

Commercial Litigation clients interviewed by *Chambers USA* commented:

> *"Bart is a brilliant, incredibly talented lawyer."*

> *"By every measure Bart is a star."*

“He’s one of the best litigators with whom I’ve ever worked. He’s an amazingly smart and talented lawyer.”

“Bart is a fantastic lawyer who is super smart and always well-polished when it comes to court. If a major problem is at hand, he is the guy to pick.”

“He has deep trial expertise which informs the way he approaches cases from the outset. He's incredibly effective in oral argument and written advocacy.”

Trial clients interviewed by *Chambers USA* commented:

"Whenever you want a case to be won, you give it to Bart Williams. I can't say enough good things about him."

". . . I like that even though he is godlike in the trial Bar he is so down to earth and gracious. Juries can sense this and they like and connect with him.”

"He's incredibly calm under pressure and knows when to be aggressive in cross-examinations. He just has a way of making juries want to listen to him."

Bart has compiled an impressive list of victories in jury and bench trials throughout the United States [*Click on “View Matters List” below*]. *Forbes* named Bart among their inaugural list of the “Top 200 Lawyers in the U.S.” in 2024. Bart has also been featured numerous times in *The American Lawyer*, *Law 360, LMG Life Sciences, Los Angeles Business Journal* and the *Daily Journal*, which has repeatedly named him one of the top 100 lawyers in the State of California. In 2018, both *Benchmark Litigation* and *Chambers USA* named him as a finalist for National Trial Lawyer of the Year.

Bart was appointed by United States Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts to serve a three-year term (beginning January 2026) as one of the four practitioner members of the Standing Committee on Rules of Practice and Procedure of the Judicial Conference of the United States, which drafts and recommends new federal rules of practice, procedure, and evidence.

A leader within the Firm, Bart is a past member of the Firm’s Executive Committee and serves as worldwide chair of the Litigation Department and head of Proskauer’s Los Angeles office.

Bart served as an assistant U.S. Attorney in the Central District of California where he concentrated on complex criminal prosecutions involving allegations of fraud or other business crimes. He obtained convictions in 11 out of 11 jury trials. He received several special commendations during his tenure, including one from the Honorable Louis J. Freeh, then-director of the FBI.

Bart is a graduate of Yale College and Yale Law School. He was a starting guard for four years on the Yale Varsity Basketball Team, and received the George McReynolds Award as the team's Most Valuable Defensive Player his senior year.

Matters

Complex Civil Litigation

Notable representations in civil trials and arbitrations include:

- Lead trial counsel for Netflix, acclaimed director/writer Ava DuVernay, and award-winning writer Attica Locke in a defamation case brought in federal court in New York by Linda Fairstein, former longtime head of the Manhattan District Attorney's Office sex crimes unit. The matter related to the defendants' series, *"When They See Us*," which tells the story of five boys, now men, known as the Central Park 5, whose convictions for the rape of a jogger in 1989 were vacated in 2002 after a serial rapist, whose DNA was found at the scene and on the victim, confessed to committing the crime alone. The plaintiff alleged that the series' portrayal of her by actress Felicity Huffman depicted her in a false and defamatory light. The matter settled one week prior to trial on non-confidential, extremely favorable terms for the defendants involving no payment to Ms. Fairstein. Netflix Settles Central Park 5 Defamation Case Ahead Of Trial - Law360
- Lead trial counsel for Gilead Sciences, Inc., Gilead Holdings, LLC, and Gilead Sciences, LLC in a $3.6 billion antitrust case alleging that Gilead struck an anticompetitive "pay-for-delay" settlement agreement with a leading generic drug manufacturer to resolve a patent invalidity lawsuit for the purpose of

delaying the generic's entry into the relevant market for two of Gilead's highly successful HIV medications, Truvada and Atripla. After a five-week trial, a California federal jury in San Francisco deliberated for two days and returned a unanimous defense verdict on all claims and awarded zero damages. Gilead, Teva Defeat $3.6B HIV Drug Antitrust Case At Trial - *Law360* June 30, 2023;

- Lead trial counsel for Monsanto in a case brought by a woman claiming that use of the herbicide Roundup caused her non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. Following a five-month trial in *Stephens v. Monsanto*, a California jury rejected the claims entirely, returning a defense verdict on all claims and awarding zero damages. All prior trials involving plaintiffs who claimed to have personally applied Roundup resulted in verdicts against Monsanto ranging from $80 million to over $2 billion. "Bayer wins second straight verdict in a Roundup cancer case.," *Reuters* December 9, 2021;
- Lead trial counsel for the major college athletics conferences, including the Pac12, BigTen, Big 12, ACC, and SEC, in a high-profile antitrust case brought by a class of Division I football and men's and women's basketball players alleging that NCAA limitations on compensation to athletes violate the antitrust laws. "Who's Who in the NCAA Antitrust Trial," *Sports Business Journal,* August 13, 2018.
- Lead trial counsel for Johnson & Johnson (J&J), in two widely publicized product liability trials relating to J&J's talc-based Baby Powder and Shower to Shower products and their alleged link to ovarian cancer. After a month-long trial in St. Louis, Bart urged the jurors to be inspired to clear J&J of liability just like *Dred Scott* jurors did in freeing him from slavery. Bart Williams Secures J&J's First Win in Talcum Powder Trials - Insights - Proskauer Rose LLP. The jury returned a complete defense verdict on all claims and awarded zero damages." J&J Gets Its First Win in Missouri Talcum Powder Trials," *Law360* March 3, 2017. After a second trial in Los Angeles involving similar claims, the Court entered judgment notwithstanding the verdict for the J&J defendants. " Could Reversal of $417M Calif. Verdict Foreshadow Doom for Talc Cases?," *National Law Journal* October 24, 2017.

- Lead trial counsel for NBCUniversal and KNBC Los Angeles in a one-month jury trial in Los Angeles Superior Court in a case brought by an award-winning investigative producer alleging age discrimination. After four days of deliberations, the court declared a mistrial after the jury announced that it was deadlocked. "NBC Benched Reporter" For Being 'Too Veteran,' Jury Told, Law360 December 4, 2015.
- Lead trial counsel for Wells Fargo Bank in federal court in St. Paul, Minnesota, in a suit alleging mismanagement of pension investments in its securities lending program. Plaintiffs, including pension funds for nurses, nuns, local philanthropic organizations and a local university, alleged that Wells Fargo placed plaintiffs' securities worth billions of dollars into highly risky ventures and failed to disclose the deteriorating condition of the investments. Wells Fargo argued that it did not misrepresent its investment strategy and that the losses were attributable to the financial crisis. After a seven-week trial, the jury returned a unanimous verdict for Wells Fargo on all claims and awarded zero damages. "Wells Fargo Beats Suit Over Securities-Lending Losses," *Law360* August 8, 2013.
- Lead trial counsel at arbitration for one of the nation's largest banks in connection with claims by a California insurance fund that the bank had mismanaged pension investments in its securities lending program. The bank argued that the due diligence performed on the securities met the standard of care and that the losses suffered by the plaintiff were attributable to the financial crisis. After a three-week arbitration, the arbitrator ruled that plaintiff should collect zero damages.
- Lead trial counsel for a prominent Los Angeles law firm sued for professional negligence in connection with its representation of Sonja Morgan, a star of the reality television show, *The Real Housewives of New York*. After a three-week arbitration proceeding in which Ms. Morgan alleged that the client's negligent handling of a jury trial resulted in a multi-million dollar verdict against her and her company, Sonja Morgan Productions, the arbitrator issued a decision in favor of Bart's client on all claims and ruled that Ms. Morgan should collect zero damages.

- Lead trial counsel for plaintiff Rambus, Inc. in connection with its multi-billion dollar anti-trust claims against two of the world's largest computer memory manufacturers, Micron Technology, Inc. and Hynix Semiconductor, Inc. Defendant Samsung Electronics America, Inc. settled this and other cases for cash and equity investments totaling $900 million. The trial against the remaining defendants, Micron Technology and Hynix Semiconductor, set a record in San Francisco Superior Court for the length of jury deliberations (eight weeks), after which the jury returned a 9 to 3 verdict for defendants.
- Lead trial counsel for the Motion Picture Association of America and six major motion picture studios in litigation against Real Networks, maker of a DVD player/copier that allegedly violated the Digital Millennium Copyright Act. After a six-day evidentiary hearing, the studios obtained a preliminary injunction in federal court in San Francisco prohibiting the sale of Real DVD. Real Networks then dismissed the matter (including its antitrust counterclaims) and agreed to pay the studios $4.5 million in attorneys' fees. *CNET News* reported: *"Real [Networks] has hired some very able attorneys . . . . to represent it. But should it go to trial, Real would do well to hire a lawyer with the same kind of charisma and courtroom presence as Bart Williams. He's the lawyer . . . who is representing the MPAA. I'm no legal expert, but I've got eyes and the judge appeared to be more engaged when Williams addressed her. . . . Cases are supposed to be judged on the facts but I'm guessing every advantage helps."*
- Lead trial counsel in successful defense of Brighton Collectibles, Inc., one of the nation's leading manufacturers and retailers of women's leather goods and accessories, and its founder, Jerry Kohl, in a breach of contract action brought by the president of the management company responsible for operating 23 of Brighton's retail stores. After a three-week trial in Los Angeles Superior Court, the jury returned a unanimous defense verdict on all claims and awarded zero damages.
- Trial counsel for Michael Ovitz, former President of the Walt Disney Company and the Co-Founder of Creative Artists Agency, in a two-month trial in Delaware Chancery Court involving Disney shareholder claims that Mr. Ovitz's compensation during his term as President was excessive. The court found in favor of Mr. Ovitz on all claims and rejected in its entirety plaintiffs' claim that

Mr. Ovitz's $140 million in compensation should be returned. The Delaware Supreme Court affirmed the Chancellor's findings in all respects.

- Lead trial counsel for a major national law firm sued for professional negligence by Alliance Atlantis, then the largest film distribution company in Canada. After a three-week trial the jury returned a unanimous defense verdict and awarded zero damages.
- Lead trial counsel for a national private security firm in an action alleging a nationwide practice of retaliatory termination. After a 13-week trial in Oakland-Alameda County Superior Court, the jury returned a unanimous defense verdict and awarded zero damages.

Some of Bart's other notable representations in high stakes civil cases include:

- Lead counsel for Tesla, Inc. in three cases brought by individual plaintiffs alleging a hostile work environment at Tesla's Fremont, California factory. Bart was retained after an earlier trial resulted in a $137 million verdict (later reduced to $3.2 million). Two months after Bart was retained, the three cases settled just days before the first was about to begin.
- Lead counsel for Miramax in a settled breach of contract, copyright infringement and trademark action brought against writer/director Quentin Tarantino relating to his recently announced plans to auction off seven "exclusive scenes" from the 1994 motion picture *Pulp Fiction* in the form of non-fungible tokens ("NFTs"). The case was one of the very first of its kind in the NFT space.
- Lead counsel for the National Football League in pending actions brought by apparel distributors and NFL merchandise purchasers alleging that the NFL's agreements with Fanatics, Inc., a manufacturer, supplier and distributor of licensed sportswear and merchandise, violate state and federal antitrust laws.
- Co-lead counsel for Shamrock Capital Advisors, LLC and related entities in connection with pending claims brought by the founders and early employees of FanDuel alleging that FanDuel's merger with European bookmaker Paddy Power Betfair improperly diluted the plaintiffs' interests in FanDuel.

- Lead counsel for Church & Dwight in a patent infringement action brought by GEMAK Trust in the District of Delaware alleging infringement by Church & Dwight widely sold laundry and detergent products.
- Lead counsel for British Telecommunications ("BT") in a patent infringement action filed in July 2018 in Delaware District Court against Fortinet, Inc. ("Fortinet"), an American cyber security corporation that develops and offers a number of security products and services.
- Lead counsel for the National Football League in connection with antitrust claims brought by the City Oakland against the NFL and all of its clubs alleging that the city was damaged by the Raiders' move to Las Vegas.
- Lead counsel for Wells Fargo Bank in connection with several highly publicized matters in state and federal courts, including cases alleging that the bank engaged in unlawful sales practices, as well as pending matters alleging disparate impact race discrimination with regard to mortgage lending.
- Lead counsel for television producer Conrad Riggs in his breach of partnership action in Los Angeles Superior Court against reality television mogul Mark Burnett and Mark Burnett Productions, producers of *Survivor*, *The Apprentice*, *The Contender* and many other successful shows. The case settled on confidential terms after three years of litigation.
- Lead counsel for Philip C. "Dr. Phil" McGraw in connection with a nationwide class action in Los Angeles Superior Court alleging unfair competition and false advertising claims relating to Shape Up! Dietary supplements, shakes and nutrition bars. The matter settled after two years of litigation.

White Collar Criminal Defense

Bart has successfully represented numerous companies and individuals identified as targets of grand jury investigations, including the brother of a former president of the United States, a sitting U.S. District Court judge, entertainment industry executives, the general counsel of a multinational corporation and other corporate executives. He has also represented politicians and other prominent figures in connection with both state and federal corruption probes.

Notable criminal trial victories include:

- Lead trial counsel for Keith Kaplan, the president of sales of Latitude 90, a publicly traded internet advertising company, who was charged in the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California with conspiracy to inflate the company's revenues and with causing the company to have false books and records. After a two-week trial, despite the testimony of two executives who had pleaded guilty and were cooperating with the government, the jury acquitted Mr. Kaplan on all charges after two hours of deliberation.
- Lead trial counsel for Paul Koh, a senior Hyundai Motor America executive, who was charged criminally in U.S. District Court for the Central District of California with violating the Federal Election Campaign Act. The jury acquitted Mr. Koh on all charges after a two-week jury trial in Los Angeles, California.

Internal Corporate Investigations

Bart has conducted numerous internal corporate investigations in the U.S. and abroad on behalf of Fortune 500 companies, universities and nonprofit organizations. Those investigations – involving companies doing business in Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Mexico, Norway, the Philippines, Thailand and Venezuela, among other countries – have involved a variety of subject matters, including corporate embezzlement, the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act and potential securities laws violations.

- In 2015, Bart was hired by the State Bar of California to conduct an internal investigation of whistleblower claims that its CEO had breached his duties to the Bar's Board of Trustees. Following the preparation of the report, the CEO was terminated.

Practices

Litigation, Trials, Antitrust, Discrimination, Harassment & Title VII, Employment Litigation, Mass Torts & Product Liability, Restrictive Covenants, Trade Secrets & Unfair Competition, White Collar Defense & Investigations

Industries

Entertainment, Financial Services, Life Sciences, Private Capital, Sports, Technology, Media & Telecommunications

Education

Yale Law School, J.D.

Potter Stewart Prize, best team performance in Finals of Moot Court Competition

Yale University, B.A.

Admissions & Qualifications

California

Memberships

Member, Judicial Conference Committee on Rules of Practice and Procedure, United States Supreme Court, 2026-2028

Member, Board of Trustees, UCLA Jules Stein Eye Institute, 2022-present

Member, Board of Directors, LA84 Foundation, 2021-present

Member, Board of Advisors, Founding Co-Chair, Los Angeles Metropolitan Debate League, 2011-present

Member, Board of Trustees, Charles Drew University of Medicine and Science, 1999-2010; Chair, 2004-2010

Member, Board of Directors, Alliance for Children's Rights, 1998-2019; Chair, 2011-2014

Former Co-Chair, American Bar Association – Litigation Section, Government Litigation Committee and Task Force on the Independent Counsel Act

Former Adjunct Professor of Law, Loyola Law School

Adjunct Professor of Law, National Institute for Trial Advocacy

Lecturer, UCLA School of Law

Awards & Recognition

Chambers USA: Nationwide: Litigation: Trial Lawyers, 2026

Benchmark Litigation, Top 100 Trial Lawyers in America 2018-2026

Benchmark Litigation, National Litigation Star 2017-2026

Best Lawyers in America Lawyer of the Year 2018, 2022-2027

Best Lawyers in America 2013-2027

California Legal Awards: Attorney of the Year Finalist, 2023

Chambers Global: USA: Litigation: Trial Lawyers 2022-2025

Chambers USA: California, Litigation: Commercial Litigation 2016-2026, Star Individual

Chambers USA: California, General Commercial Litigation: White Collar Crime & Government Investigations 2008-2026

Chambers USA: Nationwide: Band 1, Litigation: Trial Lawyers 2021-2026

Forbes America's Top Lawyers, 2025

Forbes Best-in-State Lawyers 2025

Daily Journal, Leading Commercial Litigator, 2023-2025

Daily Journal, Top 100 Lawyers in California, 2010, 2015-2021, 2023-2025

Law360 MVP: Trials 2018, 2024

Los Angeles Business Journal, Top 100 Lawyers List 2018-2025

Los Angeles Business Journal, Minority Leaders of Influence 2019-2025

Los Angeles Business Journal, Leader of Influence: Litigators and Trial Lawyers 2019-2025

Los Angeles Business Journal, Legal Visionaries 2023-2024

The Legal 500 United States: Dispute Resolutions: Leading Trial Lawyer 2022-2026

The Legal 500 United States: Litigation: White Collar Criminal Defense 2017-2018, 2023

The Legal 500 United States: General Commercial Disputes 2017-2018, 2020-2025 (Leading Lawyer 2022-2025), 2026 (Leading Partner)

The Legal 500 United States: Antitrust: Civil Litigation/Class Actions 2019-2021

The Legal 500 United States: Sports

LMG Life Sciences Life Sciences Star 2018-2022

LMG Life Sciences Product Liability Attorney of the Year 2022

Lawdragon 500 Leading Litigators in America 2024-2025

Lawdragon 500 Leading Global Antitrust & Competition Lawyer: Complex Litigation, Antitrust, White Collar, Investigations 2025

Lawdragon 500 Leading Global Entertainment, Sports & Media Lawyers: Entertainment, Sports, 2025

Savoy Magazine Most Influential Lawyers 2024

Sports Business Journal Power Players: Outside Counsel 2021

California Super Lawyers 2004-2025

Minority Corporate Counsel Association: Rainmaker 2018

Fellow, American College of Trial Lawyers (inducted 2014)