Proskauer



Contact


## Steven J. Pearlman

**Partner**

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Steven J. Pearlman is a nationally recognized employment lawyer who helps companies manage significant employment disputes, protect trade secrets and confidential information, conduct investigations and reduce litigation risk. Employers repeatedly turn to Steven to take over cases at critical stages. He is Head of Proskauer's Restrictive Covenants, Trade Secrets & Unfair Competition Group and Co-Head of the Whistleblowing & Retaliation Group.

With litigation experience dating to 1998, Steven represents companies in federal and state court and arbitration proceedings involving executive disputes, restrictive covenants, employee raiding, trade secret misappropriation, whistleblower and retaliation claims, and wage-and-hour matters, including class, collective and PAGA actions. He has tried cases in multiple jurisdictions, handled TRO applications and preliminary injunctions, defended one of the largest Illinois-only class actions in federal court, and prevailed in federal and state appellate arguments.

Steven brings this courtroom experience to his work with general counsel, in-house legal teams and senior executives, helping them assess risk, make practical decisions, protect critical business interests, and resolve problems before they become litigation. When litigation is unavoidable, he combines legal strategy with an understanding of the operational dynamics and consequences for the business.

Steven conducts sensitive investigations.  His unusual experience testifying in federal court concerning an investigation he led informs his approach.

He has substantial experience in a variety of industries, including financial services, healthcare, pharmaceuticals and professional services.

Steven was recognized by *Crain's Chicago Business* in its 2026 'Notable Leaders in Accounting, Consulting, & Law' list. He was named the Chicago Labor & Employment Litigation "Lawyer of the Year" by *The Best Lawyers in America* and is a Fellow of the College of Labor and Employment Lawyers. *Chambers* recognized him as "one of the best in the country," an "outstanding lawyer" who is "very sharp and very responsive," and someone who understands "matters top of mind for business-minded general counsel."

Earlier in his career, Steven was 1 of 5 U.S. lawyers selected by *Law360* as a "Rising Star Under 40" in employment law and 1 of "40 Illinois Attorneys Under Forty to Watch" selected by Law Bulletin Publishing Company. He is a U.S. Library of Congress Burton Award Winner. He served on *Law360*'s Employment Editorial Advisory Board, and is often quoted by leading publications, such as the Wall Street Journal. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has engaged him as lead counsel on amicus briefs before the U.S. Supreme Court and federal courts of appeals.

He received the Excellence in Pro Bono Service Award from the Northern District of Illinois and the Chicago Chapter of the Federal Bar Association.

Steven was appointed to the international Advisory Council of Community Security Service, a leading community-based security organization.

## Matters

### Representative Matters

- Restrictive covenant and trade secrets: secured one of the few *ex parte* seizure orders issued under the Defend Trade Secrets Act; obtained order reducing non-competition agreement to one-third of its original duration;

obtained world-wide injunction in federal litigation against a high-level executive who jumped ship to a competitor; and obtained a preliminary and permanent injunction against an executive.

- Whistleblower retaliation: successfully defended employers against claims before state and federal courts and at all levels of the U.S. Department of Labor (OSHA, OALJ and the ARB)
- Multi-plaintiff wage-and-hour action (Ca. Ct. App., 2nd) (prevailed following oral argument on appeal, affirming defense verdict following trial)
- *Cage v. Harper, et al.* (7th Cir.) (affirming dismissal of due process and First Amendment whistleblower retaliation claims)
- *Schwendeman, et al. v. Cross Country Staffing, Inc., et al.* (Cal. Ct. App., 1st Dist.) (affirming order extending coverage of arbitration agreement to non-signatory on equitable estoppel grounds)
- *Schwartz, et al. v. UBS Financial Services* (N.D. Ill.) (defense of putative nationwide Fair Credit Reporting Act class action)
- *Rodriguez, et al. v. Sprint Corporation, et al.* (N.D. Ill.) (defense of putative nationwide Fair Credit Reporting Act class action)
- *Creighton, et al. v. Metropolitan Life Insurance Co.* (S.D.N.Y.) (defense of putative nationwide race-based disparate impact discrimination class action brought by financial advisors)
- *Calibuso, et al. v. Bank of America, et al.*, 299 F.R.D. 359 (S.D.N.Y.) (defense of putative nationwide gender discrimination class action brought by financial advisors)
- *Arrez, et al. v. Kelly Services, Inc.* (N.D. Ill.) (defense of putative state-wide class action involving first-impression issues under Illinois Day and Temporary Labor Services Act and Illinois Wage Payment and Collection Act; putative class size > 95,000)
- *Boyd, et al. v. Alutiiq Global Solutions, LLC* (N.D. Ill.) (defeated motion for nationwide collective action certification)
- *Williamson, et al. v. United Air Lines, Inc.*(S.D. Ind.) (defense of putative class action alleging WARN Act violations; putative class size > 900)

- *Filipowski v. SilkRoad Technology, Inc.* (Cook County, IL) (defense of former CEO's claims for breach of employment contract)
- *Cox, et al. v. Flair Corp. of Ocala* [subsidiary of SPX Corp.] (defense verdict in multi-plaintiff jury trial involving race discrimination claims; affirmed by 11th Circuit)
- *Cobbs, et al. v. Mid City* [subsidiary of Beauty Alliance] (N.D. Ill.) (defense verdict on first plaintiff's sexual harassment and retaliation claims and mistrial on second plaintiff's claim)
- *Fleishman v. Continental Casualty Co.* (N.D. Ill.) (7th Cir.) (summary judgment on internal counsel's age and disability discrimination claims; affirmed on appeal)
- *Reed, et al. v. Freedom Mortgage Corp.*, 869 F.3d 543 (N.D. Ill.) (7th Cir.) (affirming order granting summary judgment on employment discrimination claims)
- *McShane v. Chemtrade Solutions LLC* (Somerset Cty., NJ) (defense of antitrust whistleblower claims under NJ CEPA); *McShane v. Reichl, et al.*, (Cook County, IL) (defense of qui tam claims under Chicago False Claims Act); *McShane v. Reichl, et al.*(defense of qui tam claims under Illinois False Claims Act)
- *Rimini v. J.P Morgan Securities* (D. Mass.) (1st Cir.) (dismissal of SOX whistleblower claim)
- *Mart v. Berkshire Hathaway Inc., et al.* (N.D. Ind.) (dismissal of SOX whistleblower claim against corporate defendants and top executive)
- *Schlicksup v. Caterpillar, Inc., et al.*(C.D. Ill.) (defense of SOX whistleblower claims against company and top executives)
- *Simkus v. United Airlines* (N.D. Ill.) (dismissal of SOX whistleblower claim)
- *DuBose v. PepsiCo, Inc., et al.* (Cook Cty, IL) (dismissal of retaliatory discharge complaint)

**Practices**

Whistleblowing & Retaliation, Class & Collective Actions, Employment Litigation, Restrictive Covenants, Trade Secrets & Unfair Competition, Wage and Hour, Higher Education and Title IX, Discrimination, Harassment & Title VII

## Industries

Financial Services, Private Capital

## Market Solutions

Corporate Governance

## Education

University of California, Los Angeles, School of Law, J.D.
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, B.A.

## Admissions & Qualifications

California
Illinois

## Court Admissions

Supreme Court of California
Supreme Court of Illinois
Supreme Court of the United States
U.S. Court of Appeals, Eighth Circuit
U.S. Court of Appeals, First Circuit
U.S. Court of Appeals, Ninth Circuit
U.S. Court of Appeals, Second Circuit
U.S. Court of Appeals, Seventh Circuit
U.S. District Court, California, Central District
U.S. District Court, Florida, Northern District
U.S. District Court, Illinois, Central District
U.S. District Court, Illinois, Northern District
U.S. District Court, Illinois, Southern District
U.S. District Court, Michigan, Eastern District

## Memberships

Society of Corporate Compliance & Ethics

Society of Corporate Secretaries and Governance Professionals

Anti-Defamation League (Co-Chair of Civil Rights Committee for the Greater Chicago / Upper Midwest Region, Executive Committee, Washington Affairs Committee, Advisory Board of Directors); Leadership 2020 initiative

Illinois Bar Association

Chicago Bar Association

Economic Club of Chicago

## Awards & Recognition

Chambers USA: Illinois: Labor & Employment, 2026

Best Lawyers in America "Lawyer of the Year" 2023

Best Lawyers in America 2020-2027

Fellows of the College of Labor & Employment Lawyers 2020

Chambers USA: Illinois: Labor & Employment 2017-2025

The Legal 500 United States: Litigation: Trade Secrets 2021

The Legal 500 United States: Labor & Employment: Labor and Employment Litigation 2014, 2017-2018

The Legal 500 United States: Labor & Employment: Disputes (including Collective Actions): Defense 2019-2020

The Legal 500 United States: Labor & Employment: Labor Management Relations 2019

Illinois Super Lawyers: Employment Litigation: Defense 2014-2019

Burton Award for "Distinguished Legal Writing" 2014

Ethisphere’s 2015 Attorneys Who Matter: Labor and Employment

Ethisphere’s 2014 Attorneys Who Matter: Labor and Employment: Top Gun

Ethisphere’s 2013 Attorneys Who Matter: Labor and Employment

Law 360 "Rising Star Under 40"

Law Bulletin Publishing Company "40 Illinois Attorneys Under Forty to Watch"

Benchmark Litigation Labor & Employment Stars 2019, 2024