

Michael L. O'Donnell

Firm Chair

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Wheeler Trigg O'Donnell LLP



#1 Lawyer 10
Times - Colorado
Super Lawyers

Michael O'Donnell has taken more than 85 trials to verdict and appeared as lead defense counsel in 48 states for class and mass actions, product liability, professional liability, and

complex commercial matters for many of the nation's leading companies. Alongside his tremendous trial record, Mike is nationally recognized for his strength in trying and settling complex litigation. Mike is a past president of the American College of Trial Lawyers. He is nationally ranked in Chambers USA, and his colleagues and peers have voted him the #1 lawyer in Colorado Super Lawyers an unprecedented 10 times.

Mike has served as national trial and resolution counsel for numerous highly visible companies, including General Electric, Michelin North America, Advanced Bionics, McKesson, Boston Scientific, Guidant, Skyjack, and Pfizer. He is a Fellow of the International Academy of Trial Lawyers and member of the American Board of Trial Advocates. Mike is a former chairman of The Network of Trial Law Firms, a 5,000-member lawyer organization that offers continuing legal education programs on litigation topics. In 2021, a case that Mike tried (*Nash v. Michelin*) was selected as one of the Top Ten Defense Verdicts in the U.S. by Courtroom View Network.

Chambers USA ranks Mike nationwide for product liability and mass torts defense. *Colorado Super Lawyers* has ranked Mike the number-one lawyer in Colorado for nine years in a row (2013-2021) based on independent research and a survey of his peers--a feat no other Colorado lawyer has accomplished--and he has been named to its top 10 list every year since 2009. Best Lawyers lists Mike in seven litigation practice areas and named him "Denver Legal Malpractice Lawyer of the Year" for 2017 and 2011, and "Denver Product Liability Litigation Lawyer of the Year" for 2013 and 2012. In 2011, Law Week Colorado selected Mike as one of 10 "Lawyers of the Decade" and "Lawyer of the Year" in Colorado. In a survey conducted by Law Week Colorado in 2010, Mike was selected by his peers as the "Best Trial Lawyer" in Colorado.

In 2012, Mike was honored with the University of Denver Law Outstanding Alumni Award which is presented each year to one DU Law graduate who has demonstrated professional achievement and humanitarian service to the community. In 2008, he became only the seventh defense lawyer to receive an award from the Colorado Trial Lawyers Association for the highest standards of competency, ethics, and professionalism.

Mike's personal interests include spending time with family, golf, reading, and travel.

"Tremendous trial and negotiation skills" and "a presence that commands respect."

– Client comments to Chambers USA

Credentials

Education

University of Denver Sturm College of Law, J.D., 1979

University of Notre Dame, B.A., 1976, English

RECOGNITION

Chambers USA

Product Liability - Nationwide, 2015-2026

Commercial Litigation - Colorado, 2009-2026

The Best Lawyers in America

Bet-the-Company Litigation, 2005-2027

Commercial Litigation, 2005-2027

Product Liability Litigation - Defendants, 2005-2027

Denver Product Liability Litigation Lawyer of the Year, 2012, 2013, 2019

Personal Injury Litigation - Defendants, 2005-2027

Denver Personal Injury Litigation Lawyer of the Year, 2015, 2018

Mass Tort Litigation/Class Actions - Defendants, 2017-2027

Denver Mass Tort Litigation/Class Actions - Defendants Lawyer of the Year, 2021

Legal Malpractice Law, 2005-2027

Legal Malpractice Lawyer of the Year, 2025

Denver Legal Malpractice Law - Defendants Lawyer of the Year, 2011, 2014, 2017, 2020

Professional Malpractice Law - Defendants, 2017-2027

Benchmark Litigation

Litigation Star, 2020-2026

Commercial Litigation - Colorado, 2011-2018

Product Liability - Colorado, 2013-2018

Professional Liability - Colorado, 2013-2018

BTI Consulting

Client Service All-Star MVP, 2020

Client Service All-Star, 2019

The Legal 500

United States - Litigation: Product Liability and Mass Tort Defense, 2007, 2009-2011, 2013

Denver - Litigation: Commercial Disputes, Tier 1, 2026

Lawdragon 500 Leading Litigators in America

2022, 2023, 2025, 2026

Colorado Super Lawyers

Ranked #1 in Colorado, 2013-2022

Top 10, 2007, 2009-2026

Personal Injury Defense: Products, 2009-2026

Class Action/Mass Torts, 2006-2008

Law Week Colorado

Lawyer of the Year, 2016

"People's Choice" Best Overall Litigator, 2017

"People's Choice" Civil Litigator, 2016

"Barrister's Best" Best Commercial Litigator, 2024

"Barrister's Best" Best Overall Litigator, 2015, 2019

"People's Choice" Class Action Defense Lawyer, 2014, 2021

"Barrister's Best" Best Class Action/Mass Tort Defense Lawyer, 2012, 2021

Lawyers of the Decade, 2011

"Barrister's Best" Best Trial Lawyer, 2010

5280 Magazine Top Lawyer

Civil Litigation, 2015-2021, 2023-2024

Commercial Litigation, 2015-2021, 2023-2026

Personal Injury: Defense, 2017-2021, 2023-2024

ColoradoBiz

Business Litigation Power List, 2025-2026

The American Lawyer

Top Commercial Litigation Lawyers, 2006

Colorado Trial Lawyers Association

Award for Competency, Ethics, and Professionalism, 2008

Best of the Bar, Denver Business Journal

Corporate LiveWire

2014 Lawyer of the Year - Litigation & Dispute Resolution (Denver)

Euromoney's Expert Guides - Litigation and Product Liability

Martindale-Hubbell AV® Peer Review Rated

The International Who's Who/Lexology Index of Product Liability Defense Lawyers
2011, 2014-2017, 2019, 2024

The International Who's Who of Life Sciences Lawyers
2014, 2017

Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System (IAALS)

LEGAL MEMBERSHIPS & ACTIVITIES

American College of Trial Lawyers

Immediate Past President, 2022-2023

President, 2021-2022

President Elect, 2020-2021

Treasurer, 2019-2020

Secretary, 2018-2019

Regent, 2012-2016

ACTL Task Force on Discovery and Civil Justice, Member

2015 Rebuilding Justice Award

Regent Liaison for ACTL Task Force on

Discovery and Civil Justice, 2013-2015

Sandra Day O'Connor Award Committee, 2013-2015

Federal Rules of Civil Procedure Committee, 2013-2015

Regent's Nominating Committee Chair, 2016

Special Problems in the Administration of Justice Committee, Vice Chairman, 2011-2012

Adjunct State Committee, 2011-2012

Colorado State Committee, Chairman, 2008-2010

Chairman-Elect, 2007-2008, Vice Chairman, 2006-2007

Code of Conduct Committee, 2007-2008

Complex Litigation Committee 2004-2005

Member, Federal Judicial Evaluation Committee for U. S. Senator Cory Gardner

Intern to the Honorable Sherman Finesilver, United States District Court for the District of Colorado

Trustee, United States Supreme Court Historical Society, 2024-2026

Fellow, International Academy of Trial Lawyers

American Board of Trial Advocates

Member

The Network of Trial Law Firms

Chairman, 2005-2006

Fellow, Litigation Counsel of America, The Trial Lawyer Honorary Society

Member, Diversity Law Institute

Member, Trial Law Institute

International Association of Defense Counsel

Member

University of Denver Sturm College of Law

Dean's Advisory Board, 2022-2026

Outstanding Alumni Award, 2012

Co-Chair of Reunion Committee, 2004

Colorado Bar Foundation

Fellow

Denver Bar Association

Vice President, Board of Trustees

Colorado Bar Association

Member, Board of Governors

American Bar Association

Chairman, Issues Affecting the Legal Profession

Young Lawyers Section Liaison to Standing Committee on Professional Discipline

American Bar Foundation

Life Fellow

Judge William E. Doyle American Inn of Court,

Master

Denver Law Club

Faculty of Federal Advocates

Board of Directors, 2004-2005

Colorado Defense Lawyers Association

USDC Colorado Committee on Conduct, 2012

Who's Who in Law, Denver Business Journal

Colorado Judicial Institute

Board of Directors, 2004-present

Judicial Awards Committee, 2006-present

IAALS Law Firm Council

Founding member

National Center for State Courts

Lawyers Committee Member

Defense Research Institute

Member, Professional Liability Committee

University of Notre Dame Law School Council, 2019-2026

BAR AND ADMISSIONS

Colorado

Wyoming

U.S. Supreme Court

U.S. Court of Appeals, 10th Circuit

U.S. District Court, D. Colorado

U.S. District Court, C.D. Illinois

U.S. District Court, E.D. Michigan

U.S. District Court, N.D. Ohio

U.S. District Court, D. Wyoming

COMMUNITY ACTIVITY

Wheeler Trigg O'Donnell Foundation

Founder and President, 2005-present

Archdiocese of Denver

Finance Council, 2008-2013

Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Denver

Board Member, 2010-2020

Denver Police Foundation
Board of Directors, 2004-present

Walking for Kids
Founding Member, Board of Directors, 2009-present

Trial.com Foundation, Inc.
President, 2005-2006

The Catholic Foundation
Board of Directors, Advancement Committee, 2004-2005

American Heart Association of Colorado and Wyoming
Chairman of the Board

American Heart Association of Colorado
Denver Metro Division, Chairman of the Board

Denver Tennis Club
Board of Directors

The Village Club
President

Hundred Club of Denver
Member

ARTICLES AND PRESENTATIONS

Co-Author, "Trial by Webcam: Tips From a Firsthand Experience," Law360.

Co-Author, "New Strategies for Defending Professional Liability and Malpractice Cases," Best Practices for Addressing Professional Liability Claims.

"Managing Product Liability in the Americas," quoted in Financier Worldwide.

"Witness Preparation Primer: Inviting a Witness to Provide Truthful and Favorable Testimony," Mastering the Art of Preparing Witnesses.

"Deconstructing the Key Liability Expert: Strategy and Secrets for Successful Cross-Examination," From the Trenches: Strategies and Tips From 21 of the Nation's Top Trial Lawyers.

Presenter, "Administrative Law," Supreme Court of the United Kingdom.

Panelist, "Professionalism and Civility in the U.S. District Court," Faculty of Federal Advocates Meeting.

Presenter, "What the Hail? Exposing Biased Insurance Appraisers," The 28th Annual ACIC General Counsel Seminar Survey.

Presenter, "Dealing with Collusion and Fraud in Property Loss Litigation, Litigation Management in a New York Minute - 2016 Edition," The Network of Trial Law Firms, New York, NY.

Presenter, "Dollars and \$ense Negotiating the Pay Raise - Practical Advice from the Decision-Makers," The Association of Corporate Counsel Colorado Chapter CLE and reception.

"Association of Corporate Counsel: Negotiating the Pay Raise."

Presenter, "Settling Strategies for MDLs: Getting Started, Setting Values, and Overcoming Obstacles," The Mass Torts Judicial Forum in New York City.

Presenter, "The Defense Perspective: How Loss Prevention and Firm Management Practices Can Impact Malpractice Claims," Ethics CLE at Wheeler Trigg O'Donnell.

Presenter, "Managing a Large Casualty Claim," The Advisen Casualty Insights Conference in New York City.

Presenter, "Avoiding Missteps in Handling Litigation and Other Disputes," Association of Corporate Counsel Colorado Chapter.

Presenter, "The Trial of a Legal Malpractice Case," The Aon Law Firm Symposium.

Presenter, "Unique Issues in Mass Torts," University of Denver Sturm College of Law.

Presenter, "Negotiation," MBA students at McGill University.

"The Nuts and Bolts of Successor Liability," presented to CAN.

"Ethics CLE: Avoiding Malpractice," University of Denver Alumni Weekend.

"Settlement Negotiation Strategies," Continuing Legal Education Seminar.

"Strategic Management," University of Colorado at Denver MBA Program.

Presenter, "Deposition Strategy 101," Colorado Defense Lawyers Association CLE Seminar.

"Leadership," University of Colorado at Denver MBA Program.

Presenter, "Leadership and Strategic Management," University of Colorado MBA Students.

Presenter, "Preventing Legal Malpractice, Potential Pitfalls and How to Avoid Them," Colorado Bar Association Continuing Legal Education Seminar.

Presenter, "Alternative Dispute Resolution," CAN.

Presenter, "Appellate Update on Colorado Law," Colorado State Court Trial and Appellate Judges.

Presenter, "What In-House Counsel Want and How to Give It to Them," The Network of Trial Law Firms.

Presenter, "Selecting Outside Trial Counsel," Association of Corporate Counsel Colorado Chapter.

Presenter, "Selection of Outside Counsel," The Network of Trial Law Firms.

Presenter, "Pharmaceutical Torts Cases in Colorado," Colorado Bar Association and Denver Bar Association CLE Ethical Consideration for Practitioners.

Presenter, "Punitive Damages," The Network of Trial Law Firms.

Presenter, "Punitive Damages," 27th Annual Conference of Colorado Defense Lawyers Association.

Presenter, "Campbell v. State Farm," The Network of Trial Law Firms' Meeting.

Presenter, "Colorado Civil Justice League Legislative Panel," In conjunction with the American Tort Reform Association Annual Legislative Conference for State Coalition Leaders and Citizens Against Lawsuit Abuse.

Presenter, "Non-Liability to Non-Participants: A Manufacturer's Duty Should End at the Playing Field, and Not Extend to Criminal Acts," Mealey's Prod. Liab. & Risk.

Presenter, "Behold the Future: Emerging Areas Including Mold, Cellular Phones, MTBE, Chromium 6, and More," The Future of Mass Tort Litigation in America.

Presenter, "Ethics and Professionalism in Client Relations," University of Denver Law School.

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Presenter, "Challenging the Admissibility of Medical Causation Opinion Derived From 'Differential Diagnosis - Application of Daubert and Amended FRE 702', The Network of Trial Law Firms.

Presenter, "Winning by Disqualifying Plaintiff's Experts," The Network of Trial Law Firms.

Presenter, "Preventing Legal Malpractice," Colorado Bar Association CLE Seminar and Torts Update.

Presenter, "Colorado Legal Malpractice," The Colorado Bar Association Tort Law Update.

Presenter, "Winning the Battle of the Experts," Professional Education Systems Inc.

Presenter, "Discovery," Colorado Defense Lawyers Association.

Presenter, "Depositions: Strategies, Tactics and Mechanics," Professional Education Systems Inc.

TEACHING POSITIONS

BAR-BRI Course on Professional Responsibility

National Institute for Trial Advocacy

University of Denver Sturm College of Law
Guest Lecturer

University of Colorado at Denver, MBA Program
Guest Lecturer

Numerous CLE Presentations

Practices

Catastrophic Injury

Class Actions

Commercial Litigation

Legal Professional Liability

Mass Torts

Product Liability

Securities

Cases

TRIALS & ORAL ARGUMENTS

Won a directed verdict in a \$100 million insurance coverage arbitration involving a novel rectification coverage claim.

Won a \$1.25 billion exit fee dispute for an electric distributor against its generation and transmission provider.

Won a unanimous defense jury verdict for Michelin North America in a \$66 million product liability trial in South Carolina. The plaintiffs claimed that an allegedly defective Michelin motorcycle tire caused an accident resulting in catastrophic injuries.

As lead national trial counsel to GE Healthcare, successfully argued before the U.S. Judicial Panel on Multidistrict Litigation to defeat plaintiffs' attempt to create an MDL involving gadolinium-based contrast agents.

Won a complete defense jury verdict for Michelin following a nine-week product liability trial in Florida in which the plaintiffs requested damages between \$80 million and \$1.2 billion following a rollover accident involving Michelin tires. WTO also won the appeal.

Won order vacating a \$10.87 million property insurance award and disqualifying a national property appraiser, and subsequently won sanctions against the policyholder and its lawyers, and won 99.7% of attorneys' fees and costs.

Won a unanimous defense verdict for Michelin following a three-week trial in Arizona state court in which the plaintiff demanded \$20 million in actual and punitive damages.

Won a complete defense jury verdict in federal court for a large international law firm accused of malpractice. The plaintiff hired our client to handle a complex patent infringement matter, then sued the firm for negligence and breach of fiduciary duty.

Represented a Fortune 500 company as national trial counsel for hundreds of product liability claims and lawsuits involving a Class III medical device used to treat abdominal aortic aneurysms.

MAJOR SETTLEMENTS

Facilitated a rural electric cooperative's withdrawal from membership in a wholesale cooperative. Our client achieved settlement for hundreds of millions of dollars below the wholesaler's demand and can now acquire substantially cheaper and renewable green energy sources for its members.

Represented Denver International Airport in high profile claims involving alleged bid rigging and unfair competition relating to a \$50 million terminal concessions contract.

Represented Denver International Airport against the Regional Transportation District in a dispute over cost-sharing agreements involving a new rail line serving the airport.

Served as national counsel to a global healthcare company in multidistrict litigation involving over 12,000 claims relating to dialysis products, including identifying bellwether cases using a Moneyball approach and assisting with national resolution strategy and settlement.

Represented a food distributor in allegations of listeria contamination resulting in 33 deaths and 146 confirmed cases in one of the largest and deadliest food-borne illness outbreaks in the United States.

Represent a Fortune 50 company as national resolution counsel in hundreds of cases involving a medical imaging contrast agent alleged to induce a rare disease.

Represented NBCUniversal and Universal Studios in a negligence and breach of contract action brought by Universal Music Group following a 2008 fire at Universal Studios. The dispute involved nuanced, complex issues including insurance subrogation and collateral source rule questions.

Obtained partial summary judgment in federal court for a large national law firm that had been sued for malpractice, aiding and abetting, conspiracy, and violations of RICO. The ruling reduced the damage claim from over \$150 million to less than \$2 million and paved the way for a favorable settlement of the case.

OTHER

Serving as national counsel for a major international company in commercial litigation involving indemnity claims for more than 200 cases of alleged PCB contamination/exposure.

Representing multiple public utility companies in contentious commercial litigation against an energy association with hundreds of millions of dollars at stake.

Selected as liaison counsel to all distributor defendants in federal multidistrict litigation in California involving vaping products.

Won a landmark federal case in Illinois defining the obligations of lead and liaison counsel in multidistrict litigation.

Representing Skyjack as national trial counsel in product liability cases involving aerial lift and boom equipment.

Helped secure a \$142 million settlement as liaison counsel to the lead plaintiff in a securities class action against a pharmaceutical company.

Defended AT&T Wireless in a nationwide class action in Colorado state court involving the billing of wireless air time.

Won complete affirmance in the Tenth Circuit of landmark rulings governing insurance appraisals. In two published opinions, the Tenth Circuit affirmed trial court rulings vacating an eight-figure appraisal award against the client, disqualifying for bias a national policyholder appraiser, and sanctioning the policyholder and its lawyers for misconduct in connection with the appraisal.

Secured a ruling from a California appeals court affirming the preemption of claims brought against our client for its abdominal stent medical device.

Won three critical summary judgment and *Daubert* rulings for a major law firm and three lawyers in a legal malpractice case, precluding damages claims in excess of \$10 million from proceeding to trial and materially lowering the clients' risk going forward.

Serve as national coordinating and trial counsel to a cochlear implant manufacturer for the defense of product liability lawsuits involving a Class III medical device.

Obtained a Rule 12(b) dismissal of a complaint filed in federal court in Missouri against a large international law firm. The plaintiffs ultimately obtained an eight-figure jury verdict against the remaining defendants in the case.

Obtained a Rule 12(b) dismissal of a malpractice case against five lawyers. The opposing party appealed the dismissal and, while the appeal was pending, the case settled with no payments being made by our clients.

Obtained summary judgment for a law firm client and an award of attorneys' fees in a legal malpractice case in which the plaintiff sought \$7 million in damages. The plaintiff appealed the award of attorneys' fees, and the parties settled the appeal with payments being made to the client.

Awarded complete summary judgment in a legal malpractice case one week before a multi-week trial was scheduled to begin. The plaintiff had sought over \$5 million in damages.

Obtained summary judgment from a Texas district court in a case alleging a life insurance company had committed fraud and violated consumer protection laws.

Successfully defended the Vancouver Canucks NHL organization in a lawsuit brought by Colorado Avalanche player Steven Moore as a result of severe injuries he sustained during a hockey game. Obtained dismissal of the lawsuit on the grounds of lack of personal jurisdiction and *forum non conveniens*, and also obtained a six-figure award of attorney's fees and costs in favor of the Canucks organization and against Mr. Moore.

Represent General Electric as national counsel in personal injury matters involving trucks that move oversized loads, including wind turbines.
