

Michael T. Williams

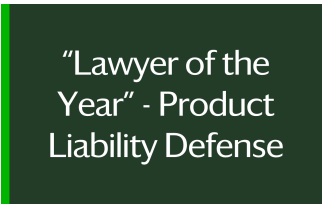
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Wheeler Trigg O'Donnell LLP



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THE
AM LAW LITIGATION DAILY

Litigation Leaders: Mike Williams of Wheeler
Trigg O'Donnell on the Firm's 'Almost
Cult-Like Enthusiasm for Trials'

By Rose Todd
September 8, 2025

Welcome to another edition of our *Litigation Leaders* series, featuring the litigation practice leaders at some of the biggest and most innovative law firms in the country—and the world.

Meet Michael Williams, the managing partner of Wheeler Trigg O'Donnell, a multisite litigation-only firm based in Denver. Williams started his career as a commercial and product liability litigator, specialized in class actions for about seven years and has evolved to be a generalist. On top of his practice and daily management duties, he also sits on the firm's management committee.

Lit Daily: Tell us a little about yourself—perhaps even a tidbit or two your partners would be surprised to learn about you.

I have a full-time litigation practice and also serve as managing partner of our firm. In 2001, I followed my wife (then girlfriend) to Colorado, where she served as an Army JAG officer. She broke up with me the week after I moved here. I waited six months to tell my parents that the relationship "was definitely over." We got back together three weeks later.

We fell in love with Colorado and the firm, and decided Denver would be the best place to raise our family. We have three daughters, ages 16, 14 and 11. **Favorite:** my dog John and family. I drink a lot of coffee. I am known as much for my love of coffee as for anything else.

I started my career as a commercial and product liability litigator, became a class-action specialist for about seven years and then evolved into a generalist. Now I split my time between commercial litigation, with an emphasis on corporate recovery actions and class-action defense. I had the extraordinarily good fortune to learn trial practice from some of the country's most spectacular lawyers, all five of WTD's founding partners (Matt Wheeler, Jack Trigg, Mike O'Donnell,

Mike Williams is a nationally recognized litigator and trial lawyer specializing in complex disputes that often involve novel legal issues. He is known for delivering compelling trial arguments that clear a path to exceptional courtroom results.

His representations include a wide variety of commercial disputes, consumer and employment class actions, product liability claims, and antitrust cases. Chambers USA ranks Mike nationally for his defense of companies in class actions. Mike also devotes a large part of his practice to helping clients recover large damages awards and injunctive relief in their most important business matters. His peers have named him a “Best Lawyers - Denver Lawyer of the Year” in three different areas. BTI Consulting has named Mike a Client Service All-Star three times based on input from corporate clients.

Clients call Mike “a great strategic thinker in litigation” who “understands the business impact and will outwork the other side” (Chambers USA). He possesses “the rare ability to communicate with business leaders in a meaningful way” (The Legal 500). Mike has represented a diverse array of international companies, national retailers, investment companies, small businesses, and individuals in the courts of 40 states and four Canadian provinces, as well as U.S. and international arbitrations.

“A leading class action defense lawyer.”

– Chambers USA

Credentials

Education

Yale Law School, J.D., 2000, *The Yale Law Journal*, Senior Editor

University of Notre Dame, B.A., 1997, *summa cum laude*, Government and Economics, Phi Beta Kappa, Pi Sigma Alpha, Omicron Delta Epsilon

CLERKSHIPS

Law Clerk to The Honorable Nancy Gertner, United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts, 2000-2001

RECOGNITIONS

Chambers USA

General Commercial Litigation - Colorado, 2016-2026

Product Liability & Mass Torts - Nationwide, 2023-2026

Consumer Class Action Defense - Nationwide, 2020-2022

The Best Lawyers in America

Denver Product Liability Litigation - Defendants Lawyer of the Year, 2027

Denver Personal Injury Litigation - Defendants Lawyer of the Year, 2021

Denver Mass Tort Litigation/Class Actions Lawyer of the Year, 2016

Commercial Litigation, 2013-2027

Mass Tort Litigation / Class Actions - Defendants, 2011-2027

Personal Injury Litigation - Defendants, 2019-2027

Product Liability Litigation - Defendants, 2014-2027

Benchmark Litigation

National Practice Area Star, 2020-2022, 2024-2026

Litigation Star, 2020, 2022

BTI Consulting

Client Service Super All-Star, 2022

Client Service All-Star MVP, 2022

Client Service All-Star - 2015, 2020

The Legal 500

United States - Litigation: Product Liability and Mass Tort Defense, 2007-2013, 2015

Denver - Litigation: Commercial Disputes, 2026

Lawdragon

"100 Managing Partners You Need to Know," 2026

Leading Litigators in America, 2026

ColoradoBiz

Business Litigation Power List, 2026

Colorado Super Lawyers

Class Actions/Mass Torts, 2014-2026

Top 100, 2016-2017, 2020, 2022-2026

LEGAL MEMBERSHIPS

Fellow, American Bar Foundation

Member, Product Liability Advisory Council

Next Gen Advisory Board, Institute for Complex Litigation & Mass Claims, Emory Law School
Member, 2016-2017

The Trial Network

Member, Leadership Council on Legal Diversity

American Bar Association

Colorado Bar Association

Denver Bar Association

BAR AND ADMISSIONS

Colorado

U.S. Supreme Court

U.S. Court of Appeals, 2nd Circuit

U.S. Court of Appeals, 3rd Circuit

U.S. Court of Appeals, 5th Circuit

U.S. Court of Appeals, 6th Circuit

U.S. Court of Appeals, 7th Circuit

U.S. Court of Appeals, 8th Circuit

U.S. Court of Appeals, 9th Circuit

U.S. Court of Appeals, 10th Circuit

U.S. Court of Appeals, 11th Circuit

U.S. Court of Appeals, Federal Circuit

U.S. District Court, D. Colorado

U.S. District Court, D. New Mexico

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

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

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

U.S. District Court, M.D. Tennessee

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

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

U.S. District Court, S.D. Indiana

U.S. District Court, W.D. Arkansas

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

COMMUNITY ACTIVITY

Member, Board of Trustees of St. Mary's Academy

ARTICLES AND PRESENTATIONS

Co-Author, Evaluating Section 230 Liability in the Sharing Economy," Law360.

Presenter, "Moderator and Panelist, "Class Actions - Case Filing and Structure," Emory Law School Institute for Complex Litigation and Mass Claims.

Presenter, "Crisis Response - Deftly Handling Your Company's Emergency," The Network of Trial Lawyers Litigation Management: New Trends and Techniques.

"Fairness Determinations: Pitfalls and Challenges in Class Settlements," FJC / JPML Conference, Emory Law School Institute for Complex Litigation and Mass Claims.

"Getting Selected for Leadership - What Decisionmakers Look For and How to Overcome Common Barriers," Next Generation Conference, Emory Law School Institute for Complex Litigation and Mass Claims.

Presenter, "eDiscovery Lessons from the Battlefield," The Network of Trial Law Firms' Litigation Management SuperCourse: Tribulations and Trials conference, Scottsdale, Arizona.

Presenter, "Why We Won the ACC Value Challenge, and What You Can Learn from It," The Network of Trial Law Firms' Litigation Management SuperCourse: "From Trouble to Trial to Triumph," San Diego, California.

Presenter, "Emerging Issues in Consumer Products Class Actions," CLE International's Class Actions: Plaintiff & Defense Perspectives Conference, Los Angeles, California.

Presenter, "A Focus on Class Actions and MDL: Coordination and Other Winning Strategies for Resolution in Multiple Jurisdictions," American Conference Institute's Mass Tort Products Liability Claims Conference, New York, New York.

"Early Case Evaluation in Managing Litigation," PLI Current Law: Strategies and Best Practices, at Chapter 16-1.

Co-Authored with Philip L. Harris and Linda L. Listrom, "Early Case Evaluation in Managing Litigation," Product Liability Litigation: Current Law, Strategies, and Best Practices, , Chapter 16, Practising Law Institute.

Practices

[Appellate](#)

[Class Actions](#)

[Commercial Litigation](#)

[Employment/Class Actions](#)

[Product Liability](#)

Cases

HIGHLIGHTS

Successfully represented Aimco, a publicly-traded apartment REIT, in nationwide litigation alleging business torts against Airbnb. After jury selection in the first trial, Airbnb settled all litigation on terms allowing Aimco to control short-term rental activity consistent with its contract and property rights.

Recovered tens of millions of dollars and substantial non-monetary relief, including the closure of an antitrust inquiry, for a Fortune 100 chemical company in a post-divestiture transaction dispute against a foreign government-owned investment company.

[Won a complete defense jury verdict for Whirlpool as co-trial counsel in a \\$66 million certified class action trial in Ohio involving allegedly “moldy” washing machines.](#)

Successfully defended a major medical billing services provider in a \$70 million breach-of-contract and business torts case, achieving a settlement for less than 8% of the claimed damages.

Tried a PAGA claim before a jury after the court denied certification of a Rule 23 employee class. Following the cross-examination of plaintiffs, the case settled on the third day of trial.

[Defeated certification of a putative class of 20,000 California claimants alleging that our client was a “joint employer” and was liable for unpaid overtime and other wage-and-hour violations.](#)

Successfully defended a leading telecommunications company in an MDL involving 18 consumer, securities, and derivative class actions, as well as mass arbitrations filed by opt outs, that challenged the company's marketing and sales practices.

Recovered more than \$10 million for a privately-held oil and gas exploration company in a series of suits and arbitrations against non-operating working interest owners for failure to pay drilling promotes.

Won a multimillion-dollar arbitration award for an energy company, recovering more than 15 times the last settlement offer made before trial.

Successfully defended a privately held oil company in mass tort litigation arising from the deadly 2013 Lac-Mégantic train derailment in Quebec. Following resolution of the underlying claims, represented the client as a policyholder in recovering insurance proceeds that covered most of its contributions to the global settlement fund.

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COMMERCIAL LITIGATION

Won a plaintiff's jury verdict and \$5 million judgment that was fully recovered by a family office victimized by a cyberattack.

Won a \$16.3 million arbitration award for a multistate cannabis operator in a Florida franchise dispute involving lost royalties and right-of-first-refusal issues.

Won affirmative summary judgment for a Canadian company in a dispute to recognize a \$9 million breach-of-contract judgment entered in Alberta, Canada, under the Uniform Foreign Country Money Judgments Recognition Act.

Successfully represented general partners in a dispute with a minority partner involving alleged breach of partnership agreement and rights to control the management of commercial real estate valued at more than \$50 million.

Successfully represented General Electric Co. in insurance recovery and class-action litigation arising from a six-alarm, six-acre warehouse fire. In addition to helping our client recover 100% of its property damages, GE paid just 1% of claims made against it, which GE then recovered through affirmative claims against the parties liable for the fire and their insurers.

Represented General Electric Co. in an international arbitration hearing that resulted in a settlement, after the hearing concluded, for more than 90% of our client's claim.

Defended the leading, privately-held healthcare software company in a series of employee arbitrations following successful motion to compel arbitration.

CLASS ACTIONS

Successfully represented a ski resort owner in class action brought by owners of condominium-hotel units seeking money damages and declaratory relief regarding vacation rental management.

Successfully represented publicly-traded apartment REITs in landlord-tenant class actions involving a wide array of antitrust and consumer claims.

Successfully defended a health insurer in an employment class action alleging hundreds of millions of dollars in unpaid overtime wages and statutory penalties.

Won final approval of class settlement and vacatur of a \$15 million attorneys' fee award from the Ninth Circuit in a consumer class action for Whirlpool.

Defeated class certification for Electrolux in a consolidated putative class action in Illinois involving millions of the company's dishwashers.

Defeated class certification for Whirlpool in a bellwether case alleging false advertising of innovative self-cleaning ovens.

Won a unanimous Seventh Circuit victory in a fee dispute for Whirlpool and Sears arising out of a certified federal class action lawsuit that we favorably settled after winning a defense verdict in the bellwether trial of related claims.

Won a motion to dismiss with prejudice a putative class action in federal court in California. The plaintiff alleged violations of the Federal Fair Debt Collection Practices Act (FDCPA) and California's Rosenthal Fair Debt Collections Practices Act.

Obtained dismissal of class action allegations and 15 of 17 claims against Whirlpool in an environmental toxic tort case. Plaintiffs voluntarily dismissed their remaining claims after the court's ruling.

Successfully negotiated an early class settlement for Pilot Flying J as national resolution counsel in diesel rebate litigation.

Successfully defended a large Colorado automobile dealer in a consumer class action in which the plaintiffs alleged violations of the federal Telephone Consumer Protection Act and sought hundreds of millions of dollars in damages. The trial court denied class certification, and the Colorado Court of Appeals affirmed that order on appeal, and the Colorado and U.S. Supreme Courts denied certiorari.

Successfully defended a Colorado software company in a securities class action in which the client asked WTO to replace an international law firm as lead trial counsel 90 days before trial.

ENERGY

Successfully represented an oil and gas exploration company in a suit to compel specific performance of a lease purchase agreement that a counter-party breached during the pandemic.

Successfully represented an oil and gas exploration company to recover damages from a non-operating working interest owner for failure to pay its share of well drilling and completion costs during the pandemic.

Successfully represented an oilfield services company in a series of noncompete and trade secret matters against its large, multinational competitors.

Successfully represented General Electric Co. in a contract and professional negligence dispute against a utility company involving a series of power outages in Billings, Montana.

OTHER

Won a reversal and a new trial on the punitive damages phase of a product liability case originally tried by another firm. Persuaded the second jury to award only one-third of the amount awarded in the initial trial.

Successfully tried to verdict a pro bono case in which our clients proved that Colorado's electronic voting systems had not been tested and certified in accordance with the law. The case led to major changes in Colorado election law.

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.
