



Paul Lawrence

PARTNER

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PRACTICE AREAS

Litigation
Municipal Law
Public Policy and Political Matters

Paul Lawrence is the senior litigation partner at Pacifica Law Group. He concentrates his practice on complex appellate and civil litigation, including commercial, municipal, constitutional, environmental, and insurance coverage cases in federal and state courts.

Paul's appellate experience includes over 125 appeals, principally in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, the Supreme Courts of Washington and Montana, and the various Courts of Appeal in Washington. He has also practiced in the United States Supreme Court, the Second, Third, Seventh, Eleventh, D.C., and Federal Circuit Courts of Appeal, and the California and New York appellate courts. His appellate clients include a variety of public and private entities, whom he has represented in a broad range of cases, including many of first impression.

Paul has been lead trial counsel in numerous successful, complex, multi-party cases—including jury trials—in federal and state courts in Washington, Montana, and California. Recent experiences include obtaining a defense verdict in a breach of contract jury trial in Washington State Court. The verdict was upheld on appeal and his client was awarded its complete attorney's fees and costs. He also recently represented a large railroad company in two federal court bench trials.

Paul is one of the leading lawyers in Washington litigating and advising on both federal and state constitutional law issues. Issues include the First Amendment, the Equal Protection Clause, the Commerce Clause, and limitations on the scope of state and local legislative power under the Washington Constitution.

Paul also has an active ethics practice. He has advised entities such as the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, the Port of Seattle, Sound Transit, and Clark County, as well as individuals including sitting state court judges.

Paul is recognized on numerous top lawyer lists. Chambers and Partners USA has for several years ranked Paul as a commercial litigator. In its reviews, Chambers has called Paul "exceptional," and has noted "he is well known for his work in the political sphere, handling constitutional and municipal matters and earning accolades as a 'great lawyer doing high-profile initiative work.' Lawrence is also strong in appellate, insurance and commercial litigation." Chambers also has stated: "Paul Lawrence has a broad litigation practice and is well regarded for his handling of complex commercial, municipal and environmental disputes. He is noted for his expert representation of clients in

appellate proceedings.”

Paul has been included in *The Best Lawyers in America*®, in the field of Appellate Practice since the inception of that category. In 2021, he was selected as “Lawyer of the Year” in Appellate Practice in Seattle. He is also included in the field of Litigation - Municipal.

His clients include a broad range of public entities and private clients including Fortune 500 Companies, significant local businesses, a foreign nation, and Washington counties, cities, special purpose districts, and port districts. He previously chaired the Litigation Department at Preston Gates Ellis (now K&L Gates) and the Appellate Practice Group at K&L Gates.

Bar Admissions:

- Washington
- Montana
- U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Washington
- U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington
- U.S. District Court for the District of Montana
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit
- U.S. Supreme Court

Education:

- University of Chicago, B.A., Politics, Economics, Rhetoric and Law, Dean's List
- University of Pennsylvania Law School, J.D., with honors (*University of Pennsylvania Law Review*, Articles Editor)

Honors:

- Selected for inclusion in *Chambers, USA*, 2018–2025, Currently Washington State – Band 2 Litigation: General Commercial
- Selected for *Washington Super Lawyers*, 2001–2026, and for *Washington Super Lawyers Top 100*, 2012–2016
- Selected for inclusion in *The Best Lawyers in America* in the fields of Appellate Practice, 2007–2027, and Litigation–Municipal, 2024–2027, and as Lawyer of the Year in Appellate Practice in Seattle for 2021
- Fellow, Litigation Counsel of America
- Peer Review Rated AV® Preeminent™ in Martindale-Hubbell
- Northwest Progressive Institute’s Lynn Allen Award for “indispensable contributions to progressive causes,” 2017
- Selected as a leading lawyer in the Puget Sound region, as determined by his peers (*Seattle Business Magazine*)

- Listed in Seattle Met “Best Lawyers”
- Preston Gates & Ellis Jim Ellis Award for service as an ACLU Cooperating Attorney
- Greater Seattle Business Association, Special Recognition Award, Collaboration for Social Change

Speaking Engagements & Presentations:

- Civil Unrest Inside and Out: Managing Controversial Employee Speech and Volatile Protesting, WSAMA, 2020
- Constitutional Limits on the Use of Public Funds – A New Look at the Case Law in Light of Current and Emerging Public Priorities, 2019
- Rule of Law in Action – Does v. Trump, 2017
- Legal Lunchbox™ Series: Injustices Under the Law, 2017
- Washington State Judicial Conference: Power and Reach of the Internet, 2013
- The Complete Appeal Conference: Strategies from Start to Finish, 2010
- State v. Federal Appeals: Winning in Either Venue, 2011
- U.S. Supreme Court Watch, 2011
- Legal Editing: Improve your work and that of those who work for you, 2013
- Election Law Seminar, 2012
- Federal Court Boot Camp Conference, 2011-2012

Community Involvement:

- World Justice Project, Leadership Council, 2023–present
- ACLU of Washington Board Member, 1985–2021, former Board President, 1989–1996
- ACLU National Board Member, 1999–2005
- Intiman Theatre Board Member, 2002–2011

Professional Organizations:

- American Bar Association Council of Appellate Lawyers
- Washington Appellate Lawyers Association

Representative Matters:

- Washington State Legislators and Education Advocates: Successful challenge to the Constitutionality of the 2/3rds Vote Initiative.
- Pike Place Market Development Agency: Defended the Pike Place Market against efforts of the Urban Group to wrest control of the market from the public.
- Washington State Major League Baseball Stadium Public Facilities District: Defended over a dozen lawsuits challenging various aspects of the effort to build the Safeco Field baseball stadium in Seattle.
- Sound Transit: Defended several lawsuits challenging the legality of Sound Transit and its public transportation projects. Issues litigated include the constitutionality of the statute creating Sound Transit and the taxes imposed to fund Sound Transit, the legality of changes to the Sound Move plan, compliance with NEPA/SEPA, and the potential impairment of Sound Transit's bonds.
- City of Seattle: Represented the City in its litigation to prevent the Sonics from breaking its Key Arena lease.
- Represented the University of Washington in a challenge to its authority to construct a new facility using a novel sale-leaseback structure.

- Represented a coalition of education advocates in litigation in the Washington Supreme Court involving the state's capital gains tax.
- Successfully obtained immunity for a law firm under the state anti-SLAPP statute against claims of negligence, fraud, discrimination, and violation of the Washington Consumer Protection Act.
- Successfully defended a multi-million dollar breach of contract claim in a Washington jury trial. Verdict upheld on appeal. Awarded all fees and costs incurred in defending the claim.
- Successfully defended King County in a public duty doctrine case in the Washington Supreme Court.
- The Republic of Nauru: Obtained defense trial verdict in a federal lawsuit alleging breach of contract and breach of the covenant of good faith and fair dealing. Trial court judgment affirmed on appeal.
- BNSF Railway Company: Prosecuted and defended cases arising from alleged environmental contamination in Washington and Montana. Successfully argued that federal law preempted a local effort to regulate environmental impacts of a rail transportation plan. Trial and appellate counsel work in Washington and Montana.
- Costco Inc.: Successfully obtained insurance coverage for defense and indemnity of an employment class-action claim.
- PPL Montana: Obtained intentional breach of contract finding at federal court trial in Montana. Defended claims by State regarding ownership of riverbeds upon which PPL Montana's dams sit.
- Microsoft Corp.: Defeated an attempt to certify a class of plaintiffs alleging product defects and advertising misrepresentations in Windows 95. Litigated a multi-million dollar CGL insurance coverage claim.
- Monin, Inc.: Prevailed in a federal court jury trial in Washington defending a manufacturer accused of breaching distribution and commission contracts.
- Queen City Farms: Litigated from trial to state Supreme Court the leading Washington case establishing that general liability insurance policies provide coverage for costs to clean up environmental damages. Obtained millions of dollars in settlement for client.
- Represented numerous public and private entities seeking insurance coverage for a variety of claims. Obtained over \$100 million in recoveries.
- Delta Airlines: Lead counsel for Delta Airlines in a five-week federal trial regarding the constitutionality of City's airport access ordinance. Judgment for airlines entered at trial and upheld on appeal.