ArentFox Schiff LLP
Attorneys

James Kim*

PARTNER

James helps companies translate complex trade and import laws into clear, strategic, and actionable business guidance.



Industries

Energy & Cleantech
Automotive & Transportation
— Logistics

Practices

International Trade & Investment
— Customs & Import Compliance
— Mobility & Advanced Technology

Languages

Korean

Education

George Mason University, Antonin Scalia Law School, JD, cum laude

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James is a San Francisco-based customs and international trade attorney who advises clients across the automotive, energy storage, solar, electronics, biotech, agriculture, manufacturing, and e-commerce sectors. His practice spans the full spectrum of import and trade compliance — from granular tariff classification issues to high-stakes litigation and regulatory strategy with bottom-line impact.

Known for digging into the details without losing sight of business realities, James works seamlessly with in-house counsel, compliance, procurement, engineering, and C-suite stakeholders. His advice is grounded in deep legal knowledge, real-world experience, and a focus on what matters most to the business: risk mitigation, cost savings, and long-term strategic positioning.

While James is particularly known for his customs practice — including tariff classification, country of origin, marking, valuation, special tariffs, duty drawback, Foreign Trade Zones, prior disclosures, penalty mitigation, and free trade agreements—he also advises on a broad array of international trade issues. These include antidumping and countervailing duty (AD/CVD) matters, forced labor enforcement and supply chain due diligence under the UFLPA, export controls and sanctions compliance, and evolving requirements tied to the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) incentives. He also counsels clients on Made in USA labeling, partner government agency regulations (such as NHTSA, EPA, and FDA), and national security reviews conducted by the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS).

James frequently writes and speaks on emerging trade and import compliance developments, offering practical, business-aligned guidance. He is the founder and editor-in-chief of the As the (Customs and Trade) World Turns, a trade-focused newsletter followed by importers, compliance professionals, and in-house counsel for its timely insights and bottom-line relevance.

**Not admitted in California. Admitted in Virginia only. Practice limited to federal trade and regulatory matters.*

Representative Work

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Advised a US battery manufacturer on duty mitigation strategies, securing a favorable CBP binding ruling that delivered over $50 million in duty savings.

- Counseled a major US solar manufacturer on classification, country of origin, and valuation issues.
- Represented a Japanese tire company during a CBP risk assessment and on-site review, addressing related-party pricing and valuation concerns.
- Advised a Canadian EV manufacturer in a USMCA qualification review, resulting in hundreds of millions in duty savings.
- Advised a Korean automotive importer on CBP, NHTSA, and other US regulatory requirements for importing fuel cell trucks.
- Counseled a US energy storage company in origin disputes before CBP and the Court of International Trade.
- Represented a Japanese optical equipment manufacturer in CIT litigation involving a tariff classification dispute.
- Advised on the implementation of a duty drawback program for a multinational e-commerce company, enabling tens of millions in annual duty recovery.
- Delivered customized customs compliance training to hundreds of employees at a multinational pharmaceutical and biotech company.
- Advised a Canadian oil and natural gas company on USMCA qualification and related-party transfer pricing.

Previous Experience

Before joining ArentFox Schiff, James served for seven years as an attorney-advisor at US Customs and Border Protection (CBP). There, he played a central role in implementing the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), particularly the automotive rules of origin, and helped shape CBP's policies on classification, entry procedures, prior disclosures, recordkeeping, and customs enforcement.

He also served in CBP's Regulations and Rulings division, where he drafted binding rulings and advised on complex customs issues involving valuation, classification, free trade agreements, country of origin, and special trade programs.

Earlier in his career, James practiced at a transportation-focused boutique law firm, representing freight forwarders and motor carriers. He was also an editor of the *George Mason Law Review* and a law clerk for the US Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Virginia.

Publications & Presentations

James' publications include:

- "How New Metals Tariffs Impact the Electronics Industry," *SMT007 Magazine*, May 2026
- "Tariffs: Hope for the Best, Plan for the Worst," *SMT007 Magazine*, June 2025
- "Tariffs and Trade Wars: What to Expect in 2025," *SMT007 Magazine*, January 2025
- "The future of US policy on Chinese EV manufacturers," *Daily Journal*, December 27, 2024
- "Build Tariff Planning into Product Development Strategy Early," *Design007 Magazine*, February 22, 2024
- "For a Good Cause: Reforming the Good Cause Exception to Notice and Comment Rulemaking under the Administrative Procedure Act," *18 Geo. Mason L. Rev. 1045*, 2011

James' presentations include:

- "Trade & Tariffs," *Canadian Transportation Equipment Association Annual Conference*, September 29, 2026
- "How the USMCA Review Will Impact Supply Chains," *Supply Chain Outlook - Trends and*

Risks to Watch in 2026, July 15, 2026

- "Impact Series: CUSMA," *Electric Mobility Canada Webinar,* June 22, 2026
- "A Tariffs Update," *Truck Trailer Manufacturers Association Webinar,* March 11, 2026
- "SCOTUS Decision on IEEPA Tariffs - Implications for Importers and the Path to Relief," *The Canadian Transportation Equipment Association Webinar,* March 4, 2026
- "Tariffs & What's Next for Electronics, Chips, Boards, & Systems," *DesignCon 2026,* February 25, 2026
- "Progress towards a PV manufacturing eco-system in the US & creating domestic supply channels," *PV CellTech USA Conference,* October 7, 2025
- "US Trade: What Just Happened?!" *Canadian Transportation Equipment Association's Annual Manufacturers' Conference,* September 30, 2025
- "Trade Wars: Episode 1," *Canadian Transportation Equipment Association Webinar,* April 3, 2025
- "US Tariff Update - Best Procurement Strategies for US Solar PV and BESS Developers," *Sinovoltaics Webinar,* March 26, 2025
- "Navigating Trade Remedies: Import Compliance Strategies in a Shifting US Trade Policy Landscape," *Professional Association of Exporters and Importers Event,* January 22, 2025
- "CUSMA Trade Update: Under a New US Administration," *Canadian Transporation Equipment Association,* November 27, 2024
- "Navigating Evolving Import Compliance in the Solar Supply Chain," *Sinovoltaics Webinar,* November 19, 2024
- "The Role of Policies and Regulations in EV Charging Infrastructure Roll-Out," *EV Chargeup 2024 Conference,* July 10, 2024
- "Chips, Batteries, & Charging Stations: Biden Administration in High Gear to Secure the Automotive Supply Chain," *DesignCon 2024*, February 1, 2024
- "US Trade Regulation and the US Market," *Canadian Transportation Equipment Association Conference*, October 25, 2023
- "US / Canadian Trade Analysis," *Canadian Transportation Equipment Association's 59th Annual Manufacturers' Conference*, October 3, 2022
- "USMCA Autos Panel," *Georgetown Law 42nd Annual International Trade Update* , March 9, 2021
- "USMCA Uniform Regulations: Conversation with US CBP," *Motor & Equipment Manufacturers Association (MEMA)*, June 24, 2020

In The News

- "Group that toppled Trump's 'Liberation Day' tariffs sues over Canada duties," *Politico Pro*, October 20, 2026
- "India trade talks get 'reality check'," *Politico*, October 6, 2026
- "Tariff Lawsuits Surge as Importers See Path to Blocked Refunds," *Bloomberg Law,* August 11, 2026
- "About Section 338, Trump's Latest Tariff Cudgel: Explainer," *Bloomberg Law,* July 22, 2026
- "US blocks quick USMCA extension, putting annual review process into motion," *Supply Chain Dive,* July 1, 2026
- "The White House is digging in on tariff refunds," *Politico,* June 9, 2026
- "Appeal plan clouds path to tariff refunds," *Politico,* June 1, 2026
- "CIT Presses Government on Finally Liquidated IEEPA Refund Entries," *The Export Practitioner,* May 28, 2026
- "Tariff refund process still unclear for many companies," *Supply Chain Dive,* April 9, 2026
- "Uncertainty reigns for manufacturers seeking tariff refunds," *Manufacturing Dive,* April 7, 2026
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”CBP’s 4-part tariff refund process inches forward,” *Supply Chain Dive*, March 19, 2026

- ”Navigating Tariffs in 2026: Key Insights for Engineers & Product Managers in the Electronics Industry,” *DesignNews*, March 12, 2026
- “Tariff refunds: Court provides first step with liquidation order,” *Supply Chain Dive*, March 5, 2026
- “Trump’s metal math lands in court,” *Politico*, February 2, 2026
- “Analysts: Parts suppliers likely to feel brunt of auto tariff compliance burden,” *Inside U.S. Trade*, April 3, 2025

Life Beyond the Law

James is a Council of Korean Americans (CKA) member and NetKAL Fellow, and a former board member of the Conference on Asian Pacific American Leadership (CAPAL). Outside of work, he enjoys running, cooking, and hiking with his family.

Bar Admissions

Virginia