ArentFox Schiff LLP
Attorneys

Jay Williams

PARTNER

During his professional career spanning more than 30 years, Jay has represented numerous individual and business clients—both plaintiffs and defendants—in numerous class actions, complex civil litigation cases, and white collar criminal matters across the country.



Practices

Complex Litigation
— Class Actions
Government Enforcement & White Collar
Insurance & Reinsurance

Education

University of Illinois College of Law, JD, magna cum laude; Order of the Coif; University of Illinois Law Review, Editor, 1987

State University of New York at Stony Brook, MA, PhD, 1984

Northwestern University, BA, with honors, 1980

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The range and scope of these representations have been extensive. He has vast experience in all forms of dispute resolution, including mediation and arbitration, and has appeared before local, state, and federal agencies and courts—both at the trial and appellate court levels—nationwide (in more than 20 different states). In the last 20 years, Jay has focused his practice intensively on defending clients in class action matters and representing clients in a wide variety of other complex litigation cases, both in Illinois and all across the country.

Working with clients, Jay's priorities are to provide lightning-quick responsiveness and identify at the outset what a "win" means from a practical business perspective. Jay assembles and leads teams of attorneys, collaborating efforts with co-counsel—either in-house, outside, or both—and understands that the client's objectives are always best served when the legal team rows in the same direction. He also works with clients to devise alternative billing arrangements when they help meet a client's needs.

Jay understands the different mindsets associated with prosecuting versus defending a case, and zealously advocates for clients regardless of which side of the table they sit on. His clients benefit from his unique background, which couples the street smarts, work ethic, and tenacity of a former interstate truck driver with the intelligence, creativity, and fast thinking of a classically educated doctor of philosophy.

This approach has proved successful for Jay on many of the firm's most complex and unorthodox cases, particularly in the class action arena, where Jay has concentrated his practice over the past two decades. While his opponents are often mired in the minutiae that high stakes litigation can involve, Jay is able to simplify and quickly get to the heart of the matter, providing his clients with cost-effective and favorable results.

Client Work

- Jay recently represented one of the largest power generating companies in the country in connection with several litigation matters, including two putative class actions, arising out of the utility's CCR issues. This representation involved the defense of negligence, nuisance and trespass claims (among others) asserted in three lawsuits (two of which were dismissed on motion within

the year), as well as defending the utility in indemnity disputes against the third-party contractor primarily responsible for an environmental cleanup following a major coal ash spill.

- Jay has represented major insurance company clients for many years in complex class action matters across the country. In these representations, he has consistently won dismissals or favorable settlements for his clients by creatively using experts and laser-focusing on the legal and factual vulnerabilities of the plaintiffs' cases. Jay's teams have a long string of successes going back nearly two decades:
  - 2005 (Illinois state court) – Brought into case to negotiate favorable class settlement after litigation class certified
  - 2009 (Arkansas state court) – Favorable class settlement in industry-wide class action
  - 2011 (Alaska state court) – Brought into case to negotiate favorable class settlement
  - 2011 (Oregon federal court) – Plaintiff voluntarily dismissed class action
  - 2012 (Washington federal court) – Plaintiff voluntarily dismissed class action after removal
  - 2012 (Oregon federal court) – Plaintiff voluntarily dismissed class action after MTD
  - 2012 (Arkansas federal court) – Defeated class certification
  - 2013 (Oklahoma state court) – Brought into case to negotiate favorable class settlement
  - 2013 (Washington federal court) – MTD granted
  - 2013 (Alaska federal court) – Defeated class certification
  - 2013 (Colorado federal court) – Favorable individual settlement after removal and filing MTD
  - 2014 (Washington state court) – Plaintiff voluntarily dismissed class action
  - 2014 (Oklahoma federal court) – Defeated class certification
  - 2015 (Washington state court) – Won summary judgment ending class action; affirmed on appeal
  - 2015 (Texas state court) – Plaintiff voluntarily dismissed class action
  - 2015 (New York federal court) – Plaintiff agreed to settle class case on an individual basis after MTD
  - 2015 (Texas federal court) – Plaintiff agreed to settle putative nationwide class case on an individual basis after motions/discovery
  - 2015 (Delaware state court) – Plaintiff voluntarily dismissed class action after MTD
  - 2016 (Missouri state court) – Plaintiff dropped class action after MSJ filed
  - 2017 (Texas federal court) – Plaintiff voluntarily dismissed class action after removal and MTD
  - 2017 (California federal court) – Plaintiff agreed to settle class action on an individual basis after MTD
  - 2017 (Delaware state court) – Defeated class certification; appeal denied
  - 2018 (Kansas state court) – Won MSJ and defeated class certification; affirmed on appeal
  - 2018 (Washington state court) – Dismissal
  - 2019 (Illinois federal court) – Class action dismissed by trial court; dismissal affirmed on appeal
  - 2020 (Texas state court) – Class action dismissed by trial court; dismissal affirmed on appeal
  - 2021 (Washington state court) – Negotiated favorable class settlement for client
  - 2022 (Delaware state court) – Plaintiff voluntarily dismissed class action by stipulation
  - 2022 (Michigan federal court) – MTD granted and class action dismissed
  - 2023 (Washington state court) – Negotiated favorable class settlement for client
  - 2023 (Nebraska state court) – Negotiated favorable class settlement for client
  - 2023 (Washington federal court) – Plaintiff agreed to settle class action on an individual basis

and dismiss all class claims

  - 2023 (California federal court) – Negotiated favorable class settlement for client
  - 2023 (Delaware state court) – Negotiated favorable class settlement for client

- When a client needed litigation representation in connection with a major environmental issue in Michigan involving thousands of buried drums leaking hazardous wastes into the soil and groundwater, the client turned to Jay to represent them, the largest single PRP Group Member involved, culminating in a favorable settlement with the MDEQ for the client.
- Representing different clients in two separate matters involving cases against major national engineering firms who performed negligent design and construction services for Jay's clients, Jay sued these engineering firms and, after contentious litigation in which the engineering firms both disavowed all blame or responsibility, won significant settlements for his clients.

Publications, Presentations & Recognitions

Publications

- "FIRREA: An Old Acronym is Turning into the Government's New Hammer on Banks and Other Financial Institutions," (co-author) *The Banking Law Journal* (Jul./Aug. 2012)
- "The Audit Committee As Sleuth: Conducting an Internal Investigation," *Bank Accounting & Finance* (Feb.-Mar. 2006)

Presentations

- "Remembering Philosophy: Being a Philosophical Being," Frontiers of Philosophy: 42 Years of PhDs from the Philosophy Department, Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, N.Y. (Apr. 26, 2013)

Recognitions

- Best Lawyers in America, *Best Lawyers* (2025-2027)
- Illinois Leading Lawyer, Law Bulletin's *Illinois Leading Lawyers Network* (2006-2021)
- *Illinois Super Lawyers*, Thomson Reuters (2009-2011, 2018-2019)

Professional Activities

- Jay represented two separate clients (on appeal) who were convicted of serious felonies, and argued (and won) both appeals in the Illinois appellate and Supreme Courts.
- In support of his interest in veterans and veterans' rights, Jay sits on the board of a community organization dedicated to end veteran homelessness, and Jay also represents veterans requiring assistance in securing federal benefits that have been improperly denied.
- Jay has been appointed by the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, Western Division, to represent an inmate who has brought Section 1983 claims for violations of his civil rights while incarcerated.

Bar Admissions

Illinois

Court Admissions

US Supreme Court
US Court of Appeals, 7th Circuit
US District Court, Northern District of Illinois (Trial Bar)
US District Court, Northern District of Indiana
US District Court, Eastern District of Michigan
US District Court, Western District of Michigan