



Christopher D. Strunk

PARTNER

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RELATED SERVICES

- Environmental & Toxic Tort
- Commercial Litigation
- Entertainment
- Asbestos & Talc
- PFAS & Emerging Contaminants
- Environmental Compliance
- Entertainment & Recreation
- Cannabis, Hemp & CBD
- Media
- Catastrophic & Traumatic Brain Injury Defense
- Chemical Exposure

OFFICES

- San Francisco
- Los Angeles

OVERVIEW

Christopher Strunk is a Partner resident in GRSM's San Francisco office with more than 25 years of experience litigating complex Environmental and Toxic Tort disputes and serves as a co-leader of GRSM's national Cannabis, Hemp & CBD National Practice Group.

He focuses primarily on the defense of large, multi-party matters, including environmental, mass tort and products liability litigation involving alleged toxic injury and site contamination arising from asbestos, talc, polyfluoroalkyl substances ("PFAS"), polychlorinated biphenyls ("PCB's"), lead, mold, and other contaminants. He represents multinational luxury goods companies, Fortune 500 consumer products companies, joint compound manufacturers and fiber suppliers, microchip and

technology companies, chemical and petrochemical companies, heavy equipment manufacturers, large general contractors and environmental remediation companies, and the pesticide and fertilizer industry.

Christopher has earned a Martindale-Hubbell AV® Preeminent peer review rating in toxic torts, litigation and products liability each year from 2011 to the present.

Asbestos & Toxic Tort

Christopher has specialized in asbestos and toxic tort litigation throughout his entire career. He has defended well over a thousand cases from filing through final resolution in both state and federal court, and has coordinated dozens of cases for individual clients as both lead local counsel and national coordinating counsel roles. Currently, Christopher and his team spearheads the defense of California-wide litigation for three major international companies for their talc-related asbestos liabilities.

He enjoys the challenge of developing creative, “out of the box” approaches to complex issues in order to obtain the best result possible for his clients, whether that means a reduced settlement, winning a dispositive motion, or obtaining a defense verdict. Most critically, he has learned how to effectively work with both sides of the “v” to accomplish his clients’ objectives in the most advantageous and cost effective manner, and presently serves on multiple committees in both Northern and Southern California dedicated to revising local rules and promoting litigation efficiencies in mass tort litigation.

Environmental

Christopher has extensive knowledge of relevant state and federal environmental statutes, with considerable experience in CERCLA and RCRA claims. He has also successfully defended numerous nuisance and trespass cases arising out of alleged site contamination, and aggressively defends clients in administrative enforcement actions arising out of alleged violations of state law and local ordinances.

Commercial Litigation

Christopher also has a wealth of experience in commercial litigation. He has successfully represented single-member LLC’s, partnerships and large corporations in multi-million dollar lawsuits involving breach of contract claims, business torts including interference with contract and business relationships, trademark infringement, and unfair business practices under California’s Business & Professions Code § 17200. He recently obtained a \$2,000,000 judgment in a breach of contract/unfair business practices case for a large corporate client.

Regulatory

Recognizing that the best defense in a lawsuit is avoiding one in the first place, Christopher counsels clients on compliance with state and federal environmental statutes and assists clients in drafting product warnings and other liability-limiting documents in order to proactively limit downstream litigation risks. He also has experience developing internal policies and procedures for his clients to

address environmental risks, including responding to the airborne or water-borne releases of contaminants. Finally, Christopher assists clients in managing environmental incidents and their aftermath, including appropriate response and reporting, managing health and safety issues, and working with regulators to address remediation issues.

Cannabis

Christopher has represented clients in the industrial hemp and cannabis sector since 2014, assisting companies in complying with state environmental laws, managing downstream risk, and defending them in high-stakes product liability litigation. Christopher is nationally recognized for his work on the environmental issues facing the cannabis industry, including litigation risks, state regulations, and agency enforcement. He has previously served as vice chair of programming for the American Bar Association's TIPS Cannabis Law Committee, and has served on the Defense Research Institute's Cannabis Law Conference Committee for the past 6 years. He co-authored one of the first law review articles ever published on environmental issues in cannabis, and his nationally-published work has been featured in the Defense Research Institute's *The Voice* and in the American Bar Association Environmental Law Section's *The Year in Review 2018*. In 2018, DataBird Research Journal named Chris one of "250 Cannabis Law Experts." In addition, he is a member of the National Cannabis Bar Association and the San Francisco Bar Association's Cannabis Law Section.

REPRESENTATIVE EXPERIENCE

Representative Experience

- Obtained a \$2,000,000 stipulated judgment in a breach of contract/fraud case brought against a hydroponics retailer after obtaining case-terminating concessions in written discovery and at deposition. (2023)
- Won a motion to stay a preferred living mesothelioma case in Los Angeles County based on *forum non conveniens*, one of only a handful of such motions granted on this basis in asbestos litigation in the county in the past decade. (2023)
- Won full summary judgment in Los Angeles Superior Court in a wrongful death mesothelioma case after excluding Plaintiff's expert reports as hearsay (2024)
- Excluded plaintiff's key asbestos testing expert at the motion in limine phase for discovery noncompliance (2024)
- Won multiple summary adjudication motions for a drywall client on fraud and punitive damages (2015 – 2018)
- Won two demurrers on fraud and punitive damages, with our motions being granted without leave to amend (2023)
- Prosecuted a complex breach of contract, business tort, and Bus. & Prof. Code § 17200 claim on behalf of an equine business owner and obtaining a substantial settlement. (2018)

- Participated in a three-week complex federal CERCLA trial as a lead trial lawyer, resulting in a verdict which was less than 25% of plaintiff's "bottom line" pre-trial demand. (2012)
- After obtaining concessions at deposition from plaintiffs' key expert, won summary judgment for an industrial equipment manufacturer upon reconsideration in an asbestos-related death claim involving more than \$10 million in claimed damages.(2009)
- Won a motion to dismiss a claim brought against an out-of-state hydroponics supplier to the cannabis industry in a high stakes toxic tort matter involving pesticide exposure with more than \$10,000,000 in potential liability. (2018)
- Successfully litigated a motion to compel arbitration in a seven-figure breach of contract and unfair business practices claim against a large, Nevada based hydroponics supplier, barring plaintiff from pursuing equitable relief and severely capping money damages and resulting in a complete dismissal of the claim. (2022)

PUBLICATIONS

- Author, Navigating Hemp's Legal Headwinds in 2022, "Best of" Series, *GPSolo* magazine, American Bar Association, October 2022
- Author, Yes to Cannabis! Just Not in My Backyard: An Analysis of Odor-Based Claims in the Cannabis Industry, *The Brief*, American Bar Association, August 2020
- Author, How Green is the "Green Rush"? Recognizing the Environmental Concerns Facing the Cannabis Industry, Volume 21, *Vermont Journal of Environmental Law*, 2019-2020
- Author, Colorado Marijuana Distributor Wins Battle in "First of Its Kind" Pesticide Exposure Lawsuit, But Is the War Just Beginning?, GRSM ETT Defense Insight Blog, April 11, 2016
- Author, California appellate court bucks national trend, allows plaintiff experts to opine that "every asbestos exposure is a substantial factor", GRSM ETT Defense Insight Blog, March 4, 2016
- Author, Welcome to the Hotel California? Out-of-state plaintiffs should check out and leave, says new decision, GRSM ETT Defense Insight Blog, June 22, 2015
- Author, Mesothelioma Linked to Therapeutic Radiation, GRSM ETT Defense Insight Blog, March 4, 2015
- Author, Is the MDL a "sophisticated misuser" of California law? California appellate court refuses to apply sophisticated user doctrine, rebukes Feds, GRSM ETT Defense Insight Blog, October 31, 2014

PRESENTATIONS

- Speaker, *Smoky Horizons: A synopsis of employment, environmental, and litigation challenges facing the cannabis industry*, MyLawCLE and Federal Bar Association, October 2024
- Speaker, *Bitter Harvest: An Updated Evaluation of Litigation Risks in the Cannabis Space*, Defense Research Institute Cannabis Law Virtual Seminar, September 2024

- Speaker, *Environmental Issues in the Cannabis Industry: Evolving Regulations and Litigation for Marijuana, CBD, and Hemp*, Strafford Webinar, October 2019
- Featured Speaker, “Understanding the USDA Interim Hemp Regulations: A Nuts & Bolts Guide to Compliance,” presented by the National Industrial Hemp Council (Washington DC, November 2019)
- Featured Speaker, *The Current Legal Regulatory Framework on Industrial Hemp*, National Industrial Hemp Council Hemp Business Summit, August 2019
- Featured Speaker, *Smoke on the Water: Environmental Issues in Cannabis*, Defense Research Institute Cannabis Law Conference, May 2019

CREDENTIALS

Admissions

- California
- Illinois
- Pennsylvania
- U.S. District Courts, Northern & Central Districts of California
- U.S. District Court, Northern District of Illinois

Education

- J.D., Villanova University School of Law, 1998
 - Associate Editor, *Villanova Environmental Law Journal*
 - Niagara International Law Moot Court Team
- B.A., *cum laude*, English and Political Science, Boston College, 1995
 - Officer, Fulton Debating Society

Honors

- Top Rated Lawyer-AV® Preeminent™, Martindale-Hubbell
- *The Legal 500*, recognition in Environmental Litigation (2019)