



Steven J. Zakrzewski

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RELATED SERVICES

- Product Liability
- Commercial Litigation
- Employment
- Transportation
- Professional Liability Defense
- Trucking
- Healthcare

OFFICES

- Hartford
- Boston
- Shelburne

OVERVIEW

Steve Zakrzewski serves as co-managing partner of the Hartford office, and has a very active and diverse litigation practice in federal and state courts in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Vermont. Steve has won trials, appeals, motions to dismiss, and motions for summary judgment covering multiple practice areas in courts across New England.

Product Liability

Steve works closely with his clients to understand their products and processes, and consistently wins dispositive motions and secures favorable settlements. He defends manufacturers, distributors, and retailers of a wide range of products:

- Elevators and escalators;
- Life-saving medical devices;
- Orthopedic implants;
- Automotive products;
- Industrial machines;
- Component parts; and
- Construction products.

He has a deep knowledge of the Connecticut Product Liability Act, as well as Connecticut's procedural rules. Steve currently defends a substantial portfolio of elevator and escalator cases in Connecticut and Massachusetts, and coordinates the defense of additional cases across New England. He also defends mass tort claims, including cases regarding opioid medications on the multi-district litigation docket, in which he has obtained over 200 dismissals for his clients.

Healthcare

Steve represents healthcare providers across country, defending long term care and nursing facilities, acute care providers, and therapists from medical malpractice claims and professional complaints. He partners with industry-leading experts to put up strong defenses to wrongful death and catastrophic injury cases. Getting the right expert on board early is often a key to success, so that every step of the litigation can be geared toward developing core defenses, or so that cases best resolved early are identified and wrapped up quickly.

These cases require an eye for detail, and near-constant attention and communication between the attorneys, providers, experts, and co-defendants. Steve does an excellent job of keeping these cases organized, moving efficiently through fact and expert discovery. He understands that his clients' reputations—built over the course of years or decades in practice—are on the line in every one of these cases and takes his responsibility to protect them very seriously. His approach has been successful for doctors, nurses, and psychiatrists in courts and before administrative agencies in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Vermont, resolving dozens of claims over the past thirteen years.

Professional Liability

Steve defends insurance agents and brokers, attorneys, and real estate professionals against professional malpractice claims. These cases are extremely important to his clients' lives, businesses, and professional reputations. Steve focuses on thorough preparation and open communication, which are crucial to developing winning strategies. Early expert involvement can also be a huge help in formulating a plan of action and generating maximum leverage.

This approach consistently produces positive results for his clients, both in court and in mediation. Steve's victories include:

- Complete dismissal of a fraud and unfair trade practice case against a real estate agency after a commercial deal fell through.
- Striking plaintiffs' claims against their real estate attorney and disposing of their case in its entirety before any significant discovery had to be conducted.
- Dismissal of construction company's claims against insurance agency for allegedly procuring inadequate coverage limits.
- Winning a special motion to dismiss on behalf of a member and officer of a community organization, including a right to recover fees and costs.
- Defeating multiple motions to disqualify counsel after being retained to work for the attorneys facing disqualification.
- Dismissal of claims for unfair business practices, unfair insurance practices, misrepresentation, and fraud against members of the mortgage industry.
- Summary judgment against unfair trade practice claims, breach of contract claims, and Fair Debt Collection Practices Act (FDCPA) claims.
- Striking claims of breach of contract, fraud, and unfair trade practice claims against a construction professional.

Appellate

Steve serves as appellate counsel to many of his clients. He has successfully handled multiple appeals across New England, including matters before the Connecticut Appellate Court, Massachusetts Appellate Court, First Circuit, and Second Circuit. His experience includes:

- Defense of appeal of summary judgment win in wrongful death claim to the Connecticut Appellate Court.
- Defense of appeal of summary judgment win in traumatic brain injury claim to the First Circuit.
- Successful interlocutory appeal of summary judgment decision in a traumatic brain injury case.
- Successful defense of appeal to the Second Circuit following victory in two-day evidentiary hearing in the District of Connecticut.
- Argued appeal of summary judgment win to the First Circuit in case regarding alleged brain injury caused by product malfunction; decision pending.
- Won dismissal of appeal to the Second Circuit following summary judgment win in product liability case.
- Won dismissal of appeal to the Second Circuit following indemnity win in product liability case.
- Won administrative appeal to the Superior Court in multi-party case.
- Co-authored winning brief in Connecticut Supreme Court appeal regarding commercial dispute between product sellers.

Commercial Litigation

Steve co-authored the winning brief leading to the Connecticut Supreme Court's decision in *RBC Nice Bearings, Inc. v. SKF USA, Inc.*, which is one among many commercial disputes he has successfully litigated over the course of his career. He has been lead counsel on high-exposure unfair competition and non-compete cases, contract and indemnity disputes, and unfair trade practice and bad faith claims. Steve represents companies ranging from national enterprises to local businesses, drawing on his broad base of civil litigation experience, and working hand-in-hand with his clients to efficiently drive these cases to resolution.

Background

Steve was born and raised in Connecticut, where he was a scholarship student at the University of Connecticut as an undergraduate in the business program, and then in the law school. He worked his way through school in a wide range of jobs — as a mover, a cook, and a tennis coach, among others. He has also been involved in community and athletic organizations since high school.

REPRESENTATIVE EXPERIENCE

In addition to the results listed in his biography, Steve has also achieved winning results for product sellers, businesses, and individuals across a wide range of cases on a diverse array of issues:

- Multiple trial wins in tort cases, including in premises defect and assault claims.
- Business dispute win in seven-day trial, recovering an award of financial damages, punitive damages, and attorneys' fees for his client.
- Summary judgment granted for the defense from the bench in brain injury claim against elevator maintenance company.
- Summary judgment in federal case against product manufacturer arising from house fire.
- Nonsuit of plaintiffs' claims in multi-million dollar insurance coverage dispute based on their failure to comply with a discovery order.
- Co-authored the winning brief to the Connecticut Supreme Court on behalf of a component distributor in a high-stakes business dispute.
- Summary judgment for elevator company in high value personal injury case.
- Summary judgment for upstream industrial machine distributor against downstream product purchaser and reseller.
- Successful interlocutory appeal of summary judgment decision in a traumatic brain injury case.
- Won two-day evidentiary injunction hearing in federal court in unfair competition case, followed by an appeal to the Second Circuit, which was dismissed.
- Won two injunction hearings in federal constitutional cases brought against education client.
- Striking of claim against a project management company for failure to procure adequate insurance for its client.

- Summary judgment for the defense in a liquor liability case in the first defendant-favorable application of Connecticut’s “constructive service” doctrine.
- Won injunction hearing on behalf of real estate agency accused of fraud, with the court finding the plaintiff unlikely to succeed on the merits.
- Obtained nonsuit for failure to comply with discovery in employment discrimination case.
- Denial of plaintiffs’ motion to obtain discovery of insurer’s claims file in contentious coverage dispute.
- Dismissal of product defect claim against RV manufacturer and dealer.
- Striking of apportionment complaint by property owner against elevator service contractor.
- Denial of plaintiff’s motion to discover the documents used to prepare his corporate clients for their depositions.
- Denial of plaintiff’s appeal of Planning and Zoning Commission decision in favor of a group of landowners regarding potential development of an unwanted housing subdivision at the end of their street.
- Denial of a planning and zoning application to re-zone land in Hartford’s historic west-end at a hearing attended by over 100 people.
- Authored the winning trial brief to defeat a plaintiff’s claim for a prescriptive easement that would have frustrated his client’s ability to pursue a lucrative real estate deal.
- Successfully restored medical device manufacturer’s contribution and indemnity claims to the docket in the face of vigorous opposition from the third-party defendant.

PUBLICATIONS

- Author, The Very Basics of Insurance Law, *Lawline*, May 2019
- Author, Are Insurance Late-Notice Provisions Toothless After Arrowood v. King?, *The Insurance Coverage Law Bulletin*, *Connecticut Law Tribune*, May 2016
- Author, Are Late Notice Provisions Toothless?, *Connecticut Law Tribune Insurance & Bad Faith Litigation Section*, May 2016
- Author, Hello Kitty! Can You Smell That Smell? It’s A Covered Loss!, *The Insurance Coverage Law Bulletin*, January 2016, and *Connecticut Law Tribune*, November 2015
- Author, Getting Schooled by Sandy and Irene, *Connecticut Law Tribune Insurance Coverage & Bad Faith Litigation Section*, February 2015

PRESENTATIONS

- Speaker, *Defending Mass Torts and Products Liability Lawsuits*, GRSM Legal Education Conference, New York and Hartford, May 2023
- Speaker, *Defending Mass Torts and Products Liability Lawsuits*, Gordon & Rees Legal Education Conference, New York and Hartford, May 2019

- Speaker, *Opioid Litigation Overview*, G&R University, May 2019
- Speaker, *Cost-Shifting In Federal Court Discovery: Where We Are And Where We've Been*, Lexology, January 2016, LawLine Presentation, June 2016

CREDENTIALS

Admissions

- Connecticut
- Massachusetts
- Vermont
- United States Court of Appeals, Second Circuit

Memberships

- Connecticut Bar Association
- Connecticut Defense Lawyers Association
- American Bar Association
- Defense Research Institute

Community Involvement

- Hartford Young Professionals & Entrepreneurs – Executive Committee
- Arts for Learning CT – Board of Directors
- Wethersfield Historical Society – Board of Directors

Education

- J.D., *with honors*, University of Connecticut School of Law
 - Dean's Scholar
 - Connecticut Insurance Law Journal, Executive Editor
 - CALI Excellence for the Future Awards: Intensive Trial Advocacy, Employment Discrimination, International Tax Policy
- B.S., Accounting, University of Connecticut
 - Barton Family Business Scholar

Honors

- *Best Lawyers in America*® Ones to Watch distinction in Insurance Law (2022-2024), Product Liability Litigation – Defendants and Professional Malpractice Law (2023-2024)
- *Super Lawyers*® Rising Star distinction in Civil Litigation: Defense (2014-2023)
- David H. Neiditz Professional Writing Award (2011)