

Christiane M. McKnight

Partner



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Practices/Industries

- Complex Business Litigation
- Appellate Litigation
- Trade Secrets/Unfair Competition/Noncompetes
- eDiscovery

Education

Loyola University Chicago
(B.A., *summa cum laude*,
2001)

Northwestern Pritzker School
of Law
(J.D., *cum laude*, 2006)

Law Review, Associate Editor

Overview

Chris focuses her practice on complex business litigation at the trial and appellate court levels. Her experience includes litigation for both plaintiffs and defendants on a broad range of high-stakes contract disputes, trade secret, unfair competition, and fiduciary duty matters. Chris also has significant experience in managing eDiscovery from preservation to production, computer forensic investigations undertaken in trade secret litigation, and related computer forensic analysis protocol negotiations and special master proceedings.

Previously, Chris clerked for the Honorable Eric L. Clay of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit. She also practiced for several years as a litigation associate at a well-regarded law firm in Washington, D.C., where she routinely handled issues arising under the U.S. Constitution, the Communications Act, the Federal Arbitration Act, and the Administrative Procedure Act; participated in the defense of putative class action litigation by enforcing agreements to arbitrate; and assisted in representing major national telecommunications carriers, cable companies, and trade associations in appellate litigation seeking review of various agency orders.

Experience

- Represents one of the largest U.S. printing and direct mail service providers in defense of trade secret, aiding and abetting breach of fiduciary duty, and tortious interference with business relations litigation brought by another large printing company before the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois. Successfully defended against the issuance of a temporary restraining order and preliminary injunction against the client. Subsequently engaged in and completed discovery involving massive amounts of electronically stored information (“ESI”), forensic inspections of various computers, mobile devices, and web-based data sources conducted pursuant to a Computer Forensic Analysis Protocol Agreement, and proceedings related to ESI before a court-appointed Special Master. Further engaged in significant discovery, as well as vigorous motions practice on discovery issues before the Magistrate Judge, summary judgment briefing, and related motions practice on evidentiary issues.
- After successfully obtaining a highly unusual order directing defendants to turn over their personal computers and electronic devices for forensic examination, as well as preliminary injunctive relief prohibiting defendants from utilizing the company’s trade secrets and confidential and proprietary information to compete, engaged in a seven-week bench trial on behalf of a closely-held New Jersey corporation and its Italian majority shareholder prosecuting claims of breach of fiduciary duty and theft of trade secrets and confidential information, and defending against third-party claims, including an oppressed minority shareholder claim. The court found in favor of the client on several claims, including theft of trade secrets, conspiracy, tortious interference, breach of fiduciary duty and the duty of loyalty, and aiding and abetting breach. The court also awarded adverse inferences and attorneys’ fees to the client upon concluding that the defendants intentionally spoliated material evidence, as well as attorneys’ fees for one defendant’s actions in violation of a court order.

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Experience (Cont)

- Represented a manufacturer in one of the first cases filed in the United States under the Federal Defend Trade Secrets Act, and obtained broad injunctive relief in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois to halt sales of the competitive product and escrow any ill-gotten profits, and ultimately achieved a favorable settlement following court-ordered mediation.
- Represented an Italian luxury shoe manufacturer in defense of a lawsuit filed in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York by its U.S.-based licensor to recover royalty payments and other fees purportedly due under the terms of a License Agreement. Developed strategy for strong defensive and offensive initiatives, which positioned the case for resolution at an early mediation and ultimately favorably resolved the case.
- Represented a private equity fund in the successful pre-suit resolution of claims of breaches of representations and warranties and indemnification under the terms of an agreement governing the sale of one of its portfolio companies, thereby securing the release of funds held in escrow.
- Represented a major defense contractor in the highest-dollar litigation ever brought at that time before the Armed Services Board of Contract Appeals, which involved 15 complex consolidated claims ultimately resolved in a settlement favorable to the client.
- Represented a major cable company in the successful appeal of the FCC's first "net neutrality" decision.
- Represented a major broadcast trade association in its challenge to the FCC's elimination of its "viewability rules" before the D.C. Circuit.
- Defended a major wireless telecommunications carrier in putative class action antitrust litigation in the Southern District of New York by securing an order compelling arbitration under the Federal Arbitration Act.
- Represented amici curiae, a group of distinguished law professors, in *American Express Co. v. Italian Colors Restaurant* before the U.S. Supreme Court.
- Represented amici curiae, a group of distinguished professors of political science and economics, in a Ninth Circuit appeal regarding the admissibility of "soft" science expert testimony under Federal Rule of Evidence 702.

Presentations

- "The Defend Trade Secrets Act: Trends & Developments in 2018," The Knowledge Group CLE Webinar (April 2018)

Involvement

Professional Affiliations

- Chicago Bar Association
- Illinois State Bar Association
- Association of the Bar of the City of New York
- New York State Bar Association

Honors & Distinctions

- Named to the New York Metro Super Lawyers Rising Stars list (2016-2017)

Admissions

- State of Illinois

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Admissions (Cont)

- State of New York
- District of Columbia
- State of Virginia (inactive)
- U.S. Court of Appeals, Second Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals, Sixth Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals, Seventh Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals, Ninth Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals, District of Columbia Circuit
- U.S. District Court, Northern District of Illinois
- U.S. District Court, Southern District of New York
- U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Texas