

T. Christopher Donnelly



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Over more than four decades, Christopher Donnelly has earned respect as an effective advocate for businesses and individuals wrestling with complex, high stakes disputes. Chris offers the depth and preparedness of an experienced trial lawyer, combined with practical and common-sense business thinking earned resolving hundreds of disputes inside and outside the courtroom.

Chris handles disputes spanning a diverse range of issues faced by businesses and individuals—claims involving intellectual property, breach of contract, mergers and acquisitions, corporate control and governance, breach of fiduciary duty, employment, defamation, professional malpractice, and virtually every other commercial controversy. At stake in all of these cases are substantial financial and reputational rewards and risks. In each matter, understanding the client’s goals and then developing a sensible practical plan to accomplish those aims are top priorities.

Chris is a highly experienced trial lawyer with substantial capability navigating a courtroom, having tried dozens of commercial cases spanning hundreds of trial days. In 2024, Chris tried a four week federal court jury trial resulting in a favorable verdict for his clients, and a six week trial in the Business Litigation Session of the Massachusetts Superior Court. He has also successfully ended countless proceedings through summary judgment or other dispositive motions. Equally valued by clients is his success in arbitration and mediation proceedings, delivering positive outcomes without the disruption, expense and time associated with protracted litigation or taking a case to trial.

Chris is a Senior Fellow of the Litigation Counsel of America, the trial lawyer honorary society composed of less than one-half of one percent of American lawyers. He is recognized in the 2025 edition of Best Lawyers in America for his work in Commercial Litigation, Intellectual Property Litigation, Arbitration and Corporate Governance Law. Chambers USA recognized Chris as a leading Massachusetts Commercial Litigation Practitioner. In addition, Chris is selected annually by his peers as a New England and Massachusetts Super Lawyer in Business Litigation.

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RELATED PRACTICES

Complex Business Litigation
Intellectual Property Litigation
Merger & Acquisition Disputes
Employment Litigation
Appellate Litigation
Arbitration & Mediation
Corporate Governance & Shareholder Disputes

EDUCATION

JD, with Honors, University of Michigan Law School, 1980
SB, Massachusetts Institute of Technology 1977

CLERKSHIP

Hon. Lawrence W. Pierce,
United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit and United States District Court for the Southern District of New York

BAR ADMISSIONS

Massachusetts
United States Supreme Court
United States Courts of Appeals for the First, Second, Ninth and Federal Circuits
United States District Courts for Massachusetts and Southern District of New York

EXPERIENCE

Intellectual Property Litigation

- Successfully defended trade secrets misappropriation claims at extended jury trial.
- Successfully represented a biotechnology company in “bet the company” multi-forum trials against a competitor company and major university in which we vindicated at trial our client’s rights to its valuable inventions.
- Successfully resolved trade secrets claims concerning leading security technologies.
- Protected a musician’s rights to one of the most famous names in early rock ‘n roll through victory in federal circuit court.
- In a ground-breaking theft-of-idea case, won a complete victory following lengthy trial for a national magazine publisher.
- Won summary judgment dismissal of contributory copyright infringement and vicarious liability claims against a trade show producer.
- Handled a range of patent infringement cases covering a variety of inventions and issues.

Corporate Governance & Shareholder Disputes

- Handled disputes among shareholders and directors of private, closely held companies with revenues ranging from several million to hundreds of millions of dollars.
- Won favorable jury verdict in dispute among owners of large closely held business.
- Represented officers and directors of public companies against allegations of breach of duties.
- Advised majority and minority shareholders regarding litigation avoidance.

Merger & Acquisition Disputes

- Obtained a winning jury verdict in a groundbreaking post-acquisition dispute involving implied reasonable efforts obligation.
- Won multimillion dollar arbitration award of post-closing milestone payments and attorneys’ fees.

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Professional Liability Litigation

- Successfully defended a national accounting firm at a five week trial against \$25 million claims arising from allegations involving performance of audit engagement and loan loss reserves.
- Prosecuted and defended legal malpractice cases, some involving millions of dollars.
- Represented clients in claims alleging breach of duties by trustees and other fiduciaries.

Employment Litigation

- Won dismissal after trial of age discrimination claims.
- Summary judgment dismissal of defamation claims in several cases.
- Successfully litigated countless claims involving non-competition and non-disclosure claims.

Appellate Litigation

- Won 2024 decision of First Circuit vacating jury verdict in securities fraud case.
- Secured affirmance of trial court order denying national accounting firm's effort to compel arbitration of client claim.
- Secured affirmance of dismissed contract claims.