



Sanford E. Watson

MEMBER

Cleveland

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OVERVIEW

Sanford is a Member in the Litigation Department at McDonald Hopkins. An experienced trial attorney and arbitrator with real-world experience, Sanford focuses on finding the best ethical and practical business solution for his clients. His practice includes litigating business disputes and products liability cases in federal and state court.

Sanford also guides clients in matters related to eminent domain and contract disputes. In addition to extensive civil litigation experience, he served as a prosecutor and then Chief Prosecutor for the City of Cleveland, where he tried numerous jury trials to verdict and hundreds of bench trials, supervised and trained assistant prosecutors, reviewed internal affairs and use of deadly force investigations, and issued criminal charges where appropriate.

Beyond his expertise in the courtroom, Sanford also provides practical business counsel to clients involved in real estate appropriations cases, commercial arbitration and administrative law issues. A former Director of Public Safety for the City of Cleveland, Sanford's clients benefit from his experience administering government contracts, negotiating mutual aid agreements and consent decrees, developing law enforcement policy, and hearing collective bargaining unit grievances and disciplinary matters.

Sanford has been recognized as a leader for his dedication to diversity and inclusion efforts in the Northeast Ohio legal community.

Sanford earned his J.D. from Georgetown University Law Center, and his B.A. from Morehouse College.

Practice Focus

Business litigation | Energy litigation | Class action defense | Labor and employment | Public law | Government compliance, investigations, and white collar defense | Land use

Industries

Financial services | Life sciences | Colleges and universities

Sanford E. Watson

Representative Cases & Matters

- Represented municipalities and property owners in multiple eminent domain cases and counseled public finance clients regarding appropriations issues
- Represented municipality and served as trial counsel in eminent domain case to determine just compensation (jury trial)
- Represented corporation in real estate case and obtained favorable declaratory judgment (bench trial)
- Represented property owners and tenants in multiple commercial lease disputes.
- Represented transportation agency in government contracts case and successfully secured summary judgment on all claims.
- Represented corporate and government clients in internal investigations involving employment issues, including employee misconduct and/or racial discrimination claims
- Represented and counseled government entities regarding public safety issues, law enforcement best practices, and public policy
- Represented medical device company in several product liability MDL involving hip implant system; defended company sales leadership, distributors, and national sales force in discovery depositions in federal and state courts; and served on trial team in six-week jury trial resulting in defense verdict (jury trial)
- Represented pharmaceutical company in product liability MDL involving birth control products; defended company sales leadership and national sales force in discovery depositions in federal and state courts
- Represented municipality in tort liability claims and successfully secured summary judgment on the basis of governmental immunity
- Represented hospital in breach of contract action arising out of the sale of a medical practice (jury trial)

Honors & Recognition

Ramey Award for Distinguished Community Service, Ohio State Bar Foundation (2021)

Trailblazer Award, Norman S. Minor Bar Association (2019)

“Leading By Example” Award, Cleveland-Marshall College of Law Chapter of the Black Law Students Association (2018)

Most Influential Black Lawyers, Savoy Magazine (Spring 2015)

Inclusion Innovation Award, Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association (2014)

Antioch Baptist Church “Man of the Year Award” (2009)

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Credentials

EDUCATION

Georgetown University Law Center

Morehouse College

ADMISSIONS – COURT

U.S. Supreme Court

Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals

U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit

U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Ohio

U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Ohio

ADMISSIONS – STATE

Ohio

Professional & Civic

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

American Arbitration Association, Commercial and Consumer Arbitration Panels

Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association

Judicial Conference of the Ohio Eighth District, Life Member

National Bar Association (NBA), NBA-ADR Section, Certified Arbitrator

Norman S. Minor Bar Association

Past President (NBA Cleveland Chapter)

Annual Law Student Summit for Success, Co-Chair (2016-2021)

Ohio Board of Professional Conduct (2011-2018)

Vice Chair of the Board (2017-2018)

Advisory Opinion Committee Chair (2015-2016)

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Ohio State Bar Association

Federal Bar Association, Northern District of Ohio Chapter, Board of Directors (2013-2017)

William K. Thomas Inn, American Inns of Court (1991-2004)

Case Western Reserve University School of Law, Assistant Adjunct Professor (2001, 2003)

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Cleveland Institute of Music, Trustee, Governance Committee Chair

Greater Cleveland Partnership Equity & Inclusion Advisory Board

Greater Cleveland Urban Film Foundation, Board of Directors

Karamu House, Board of Directors (2016-2022)

Domestic Violence and Child Advocacy Center, Board of Directors (2006-2015)

Nature Center at Shaker Lakes, Board of Directors (2007-2008)

News & Insights

NEWS | JULY 18, 2022

McDonald Hopkins welcomes Sanford Watson to Litigation Department and Energy team

EXTERNAL NEWS & PUBLICATIONS

"Don't Be a Target for Lawsuits," Wholesale & Distribution International (April 2017)

"Call'ing All Pharmaceutical Manufacturers: An Update on the Legal Implications of Sales Representative Call Notes," Bloomberg Law Pharmaceutical Law & Industry Report (March 2017)

"Stone Soup: A Recipe for Implementing a Diversity and Inclusion Program in Any Law Office," Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Journal (February 2015)

"Death of a Sales Rep: Bringing the Rep to the Table for Witness Preparation in a Products Liability Case," DRI's RX for the Defense (October 2014)

Events

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

The Twenty-Fifth Judicial Conference of the Eighth District, Co-Chair, Ohio Eighth Judicial District (May 2022)

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"Navigating the Muddy Waters of Law School," Norman S. Minor Bar Association 6th Annual Law Student Summit for Success (September 2021)

"Exploring Legal Careers," Norman S. Minor Bar Association 5th Annual Law Student Summit for Success (November 2020)

Cleveland Internship Summit, Panelist, Greater Cleveland Partnership, Cleveland, Ohio (February 2020)

"Prosecutorial Discretion," When They See Us, Greater Cleveland Delta Foundation Life Development Center, Cleveland, Ohio (November 2019)

"On Being a Catalyst for Reform: A Conversation with the Monitor of the Cleveland Police Consent Decree," Federal Bar Association 2016 Annual Meeting and Convention, Cleveland, Ohio (September 2016)

"Creating and Sustaining Successful Pipeline Programs – Stepping Stones to a More Diverse & Inclusive Profession," Webinar, Federal Bar Association (July 2016)

"Diversity and Inclusiveness," Ernst & Young LLP, Cleveland, Ohio (November 2015)

Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association Career Fair, Panelist (November 2013)

"Starting a Diversity Pipeline Program," Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association, 5th Annual Diversity & Inclusion Conference (March 2012)

"Is the Business Case for Diversity Dead?," Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association, 4th Annual Diversity Networking Conference, Conference Co-Chair and Panel Moderator (March 2011)

"Ethical Issues to Beware Of," Institute for Paralegal Education (June 2009)

"Municipal Law Update," Cuyahoga County Bar Association (September 2003)

"The Record," Ohio Eighth District Court of Appeals, Appellate Walk-thru Seminar (1995, 1998)