



Catherine M. Masters

COUNSEL

Catherine enjoys a challenge. For almost 40 years, she has briefed and argued the most complex litigation issues at the trial and appellate levels in state and federal courts.



Industries

[Consumer Products](#)

Practices

[Complex Litigation](#)

— [Appellate](#)

— [Class Actions](#)

— [Commercial](#)

— [Professional Liability](#)

[Labor, Employment & OSHA](#)

— [Labor, Employment & OSHA: Counseling](#)

— [Labor, Employment & OSHA: Litigation](#)

[Insurance & Reinsurance](#)

Languages

[Ancient Greek](#)

[Latin](#)

Education

University of Chicago Law School, JD, with honors,
The University of Chicago Law Review, Editorial
Board, Joseph Henry Beale Prize, 1982

Yale University, MA, Classical Languages and
Literature, 1977

University of Chicago, AB, Classical Languages and
Literature, with honors, Phi Beta Kappa, 1976

Offices

[Chicago](#)

Phone

[312.258.5565](#)

Email

catherine.masters@afslaw.com

When cases go awry, she steps in to steer them in the right direction and provide the counsel, analysis, and strategy to solve difficult legal problems. Catherine deftly litigates matters related to insurance/reinsurance, product liability, employment, constitutional law, professional liability, and general commercial disputes.

Client Work

Insurance and Reinsurance

- “Rescuing” insurer clients from seriously adverse outcomes, in state and federal courts nationwide, often involving claims of bad faith.
- Winning summary judgment for insurers and reinsurers on duty-to-defend and coverage issues.
- Successful arbitrations on behalf of insurers and reinsurers.
- Bankruptcy proceedings on behalf of carrier whose policyholders are involved in bankruptcy.

Product Liability

- Representing clients in important product liability matters of first impression in the highest courts of several states (including Ohio, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Texas) on the constitutionality of tort reform legislation, clarification and content of available tort theories, exposure/risk/fear issues, and accrual/limitation issues.
- Successfully briefing numerous matters relating to the asbestos multidistrict litigation (MDL) proceedings, including the severance of punitive damages claims upon remand, mandamus proceedings concerning the legitimacy of the MDL proceedings, and complex discovery issues.
- Litigating influential cases on the courts’ authority to manage their dockets by placing marginal cases on inactive status, the application of market-share theory to asbestos litigation, and nationwide class certification.

Employment

- Defending municipal bodies in numerous Section 1983 cases asserting First Amendment, equal protection, and due process constitutional claims, including reverse-discrimination, whistleblower, and class action cases.
- Litigating the applicability of pre-dispute arbitration agreements to Title VII claims.
- Obtaining post-trial entry of judgment as a matter of law, overturning a federal jury verdict on retaliation and punitive damages, and successfully defending this result on appeal.

Previous Work

Catherine served as a law clerk for the Honorable Luther M. Swygert, US Court of Appeals, Seventh Circuit (1982 – 1984).

Boards, Memberships & Certifications

- American Bar Association
- Chicago Bar Association
- Seventh Circuit Bar Association
- Former board member and board co-chair of Legal Aid Chicago (f/k/a/ LAF). Legal Aid Chicago brings equal access to justice by providing high-quality, free legal services each year to thousands of Cook County’s poorest and most vulnerable residents.
- Chicago Bar Association Chorus. The Chicago Bar Association Symphony Orchestra and Chorus is Chicagoland’s unique musical ensemble of attorneys, judges, and legal professionals, founded in 1986.

Publications, Presentations & Recognitions

Publications

- [“May a Court Enjoin Arbitration as Precluded by a Prior Confirmed Arbitration Award?”](#) (co-author, ARIAS Quarterly, 2015)
- “Punitive Damages Claims and the Illinois Survival Act” (bepress 2007)

Recognitions

- Best Lawyers in America, *Best Lawyers* (2015-2025)
- Illinois Leading Lawyer, Law Bulletin’s *Illinois Leading Lawyers Network* (2006-2021)
- Lawyer of the Year in Chicago (Insurance), *Best Lawyers in America* (2019)
- Top 100 Women Business Lawyers, Law Bulletin’s *Illinois Leading Lawyers Network* (2015)
- Peer Reviewed AV® Preeminent™, *Martindale-Hubbell* (since 2007)
- Schiff Hardin Community Service Award (June 2016)

Professional Activities

Catherine has served as an adjunct professor at the University of Chicago Law School since 2011, teaching the “Litigation Laboratory” course.

Catherine has a committed pro bono practice, including immigration, death penalty, and family law matters.

Bar Admissions

[Illinois](#)

Court Admissions

US Supreme Court
US Court of Appeals, 2nd Circuit
US Court of Appeals, 3rd Circuit
US Court of Appeals, 5th Circuit
US Court of Appeals, 6th Circuit
US Court of Appeals, 7th Circuit
US Court of Appeals, 8th Circuit
US Court of Appeals, 9th Circuit
US Court of Appeals, 10th Circuit
US Court of Appeals, 11th Circuit
US Court of Appeals, Federal Circuit
US District Court, Central District of Illinois
US Bankruptcy Court, Northern District of Illinois