



J. Laurens Wilkes

Partner

Houston

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Laurens, Chair of Infrastructure & Projects – Global Disputes, focuses his practice on complex civil litigation in state and federal courts highlighting infrastructure, fiduciary duty, and products liability disputes. He represents clients in the transportation, aerospace, energy, construction, and financial industries in litigation, counseling, and regulatory matters. He is an active member of the Construction Law Sections of the American Bar Association and State Bar of Texas, as well as a member of the Eastern District of Texas and Fifth Circuit Bar Associations.

In the infrastructure industry he has represented both contractors and owners/sponsors as well as lenders. He handles breach of contract, products liability, fraud and fiduciary duty, trade secret, restructuring, and tort matters. He has led many trial and arbitration matters involving multibillion dollar disputes from preliminary restraining orders and injunctions to jury trials and final hearings.

Additionally, Laurens implements and manages e-discovery polices and practices for clients around the world related to major multiparty and multiforum litigation. He also served as co-chair of the Special Olympics Committee and he served on the United Way Young Leaders Council.

Key Matters

Some of the experience represented below may have been handled at a previous firm.

- Represented the subsidiary of an infrastructure contractor and technology solutions provider company in a construction arbitration arising out of a large-scale construction project in Tennessee. A subcontractor on the project filed a claim seeking declaratory judgment as well as damages for breach of contract. After navigating a series of disputed motions and raising certain affirmative claims against the subcontractor, the matter successfully resolved at mediation.
- Assisted a major infrastructure manufacturer of environmental equipment in resolving claims related to components installed at two large power plants.
- Defended a Canadian private equity fund and its portfolio company against various state law claims, including fraud and fiduciary duty. After raising procedural and venue issues and various defenses to such claims, successfully assisted in resolving the matter.
- Secured a complete dismissal for Babcock Power Environmental, Inc. (BPE) against allegations of breach of contract in a Florida construction dispute. After reviewing BPE's motion to dismiss, the federal district court adopted many of BPE's arguments and found that no plausible basis for the lawsuit existed on the facts pled. The matter was dismissed in its entirety and without leave to amend.
- Defended an international infrastructure company in Texas federal court against fiduciary duty and fraudulent transfer claims stemming from construction and bankruptcy disputes.
- Defended Jacobs Engineering Group, Inc. in a wrongful death action arising out of the deaths of four workers at DuPont's insecticide plant in LaPorte, Texas after a toxic chemical release in November 2014.
- Filed an arbitration proceeding against an international oil and gas company seeking damages for the destruction of Newpark Mats and Integrated Service LLC's property. Newpark owned numerous industrial mats that were on lease at the site of a gas well explosion and fire in Ohio. Newpark asserted claims for breach of contract, among others, and sought damages for the destroyed property. The matter was successfully resolved for Newpark.
- Successfully defended a global pharmaceutical manufacturer in a wrongful death suit filed by the parents of a young woman with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia who died in a clinical trial for CAR-T cell therapy. Following fact and expert discovery involving nine experts, secured summary judgment on all claims in favor of the client. In addition to dismissing all claims against the client, the reasoned decision by the Chief Judge of the Southern District of Texas added valuable clarity to the application of the learned intermediary doctrine to clinical trials.
- Advised senior creditors holding in excess of US\$7.4B in iHeartCommunications, Inc.'s prepetition indebtedness in connection with all aspects of the restructuring of iHeart's debt in a chapter 11 proceeding in the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of Texas, including the negotiation and issuance of an approximately US\$3.5B senior secured exit term loan credit facility for iHeartCommunications, Inc. that was distributed to creditors under the plan.
- Defended a major drug manufacturer against public nuisance and related tort and statutory claims asserted in actions consolidated for pretrial proceedings in *In re: National Prescription Opiate Litigation*, No. 1:17-MD-2804 (Northern District of Ohio), as well as in analogous state court actions in Arkansas, New Jersey, Nevada, Pennsylvania, and Texas.

Recognitions

- Recognized as a “Key Lawyer” for trial and arbitration work in the construction sector by *Legal 500 US* (2021-2022)
 - Named a “Texas Super Lawyer” (2023) and a “Texas Rising Star” (2014-2020) by *Texas Super Lawyers*
 - Selected as a “Rising Star” for 2018 by *Law360*
 - Named to “Top 100 Up-and-Coming Texas Rising Stars” for 2017 by *Texas Super Lawyers*
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Activities

- Fellow, Texas Bar Foundation
 - Fellow, American Bar Foundation
 - Former Co-Chair, Special Olympics Committee
 - Former Member, United Way Young Leaders Council
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Credentials

EDUCATION

Laurens received his B.A., *summa cum laude*, from Tufts University in Philosophy in 2002. He earned his J.D. with honors from The University of Texas at Austin in 2005.

ADMISSIONS

- Georgia
- Texas

CLERKSHIPS

- USDC - Eastern District of TX for the Honorable Ron Clark

Related Insights & News

IN THE MEDIA

Laurens Wilkes Joins Winston & Strawn in Houston Office

MARCH 5, 2024

PRESS RELEASE

Winston & Strawn Adds Prominent Commercial Litigator Laurens Wilkes in Houston

MARCH 4, 2024

Capabilities

