



William O'Neil

Partner
Managing Partner, Chicago

Chicago
+1 312-558-5308

Bill is the managing partner of Winston's Chicago office. He concentrates his practice on high-stakes trial work. An adept problem solver, Bill serves as a strategic advisor to some of the nation's largest corporations and private equity funds.

Bill is an accomplished trial lawyer who litigates and facilitates resolution of high-stakes business disputes. He has tried 22 cases to verdict, including 14 as first-chair trial counsel.

Bill is a sought-after counselor to some of America's largest corporations and private equity funds. Widely regarded as one of the nation's preeminent M&A litigators, Bill has litigated dozens of buyer-seller disputes in the Delaware Court of Chancery and won what may be the largest working-capital dispute in U.S. M&A history. Bill is regularly quoted in *The Wall Street Journal* regarding the representation and warranty (R&W) insurance market.

Bill's litigation prowess has been lauded by *Benchmark Litigation US* who dubbed him an "Illinois Litigation Star." *The Legal 500 US* recognized Bill as a "Key Lawyer" for M&A Litigation: Defense, highlighting client testimony that "Bill O'Neil and his team understand M&A in great detail and are able to apply that understanding to masterful litigation skills and strategies . . . We could not have hoped for a more skilled group . . . Their client-service is top notch . . . Bill and his team are trusted advisors that give advice rather than just blindly agreeing to client suggestions."

Key Matters

M&A Litigation

A significant portion of Bill's practice involves representing strategic acquirers, private equity funds, and their portfolio companies. Bill frequently represents buyers and sellers in post-closing disputes, including working-capital, indemnity, R&W insurance, and fraud claims.

Bill has recovered hundreds of millions of dollars in post-closing judgments and settlements for aggrieved buyers in M&A disputes.

More than a dozen private equity funds have retained Bill to handle these disputes for dozens of portfolio companies; often where another law firm handled the underlying transaction. He brings a practical, business-minded approach to contentious disputes and he is frequently praised by his clients for the depth of his understanding of M&A transactions.

Bill represents numerous public company clients in corporate governance litigation, shareholder strike suits, and internal investigations. He has been retained by corporate boards and independent committees to bring impartial advice to delicate, complicated, and often crisis-level scenarios.

Complex Commercial Litigation

Beyond the M&A arena, Bill also handles a wide range of business disputes with customers, vendors, and suppliers. He has represented dozens of Fortune 500 companies in disputes ranging from routine to high-stakes, "bet-the-company" litigation. Bill is frequently called upon to provide risk-management and litigation-avoidance advice to his clients.

Non-Compete Litigation

Bill represents corporations in non-compete litigation adverse to senior executives and their new employers. Bill has handled numerous "corporate-raiding" cases where two major corporations were pitted against each other in a dispute over human capital.

Pro Bono

Bill's pro bono cases have included representing a prison inmate in a successful appeal before the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals that resulted in new law in the circuit, the court's reversal of its own prior precedent, and the reversal of the defendant's conviction.

Recognitions

- *Crain's Chicago Business*—Named among the “Notable Leaders in Accounting, Consulting & Law”—This award is given to individuals who demonstrate an exceptional level of skill in their chosen profession while actively working to improve the greater Chicago area. (2024)
 - *The Legal 500 US*—Recognized as a “Key Lawyer” for Dispute Resolution: Securities Litigation: Defense (2024); Transport: Rail and Road: Litigation and Regulation (2023–2024); and M&A Litigation: Defense (2021–2024)
 - *Corporate Counsel Women, Influence & Power in Law Awards*—Recognized as an “Ally of the Year” honoree—This national award honors leading individuals in the workplace who listen with empathy and seek to understand different perspectives, show up by being present, engaged, and committed to diversity efforts in the firm, and speak up as an advocate to others. (2023)
 - *Benchmark Litigation US*
 - Recognized as an “Illinois Litigation Star” (2020–2025)
 - Listed on the “Under 40 Hot List”—This national award recognizes the nation’s most accomplished trial lawyers under the age of 40 based upon a peer review and case-examination process. (2016–2019)
 - Microsoft’s Advocacy Academy—One of just 16 lawyers invited to participate in a week-long intensive trial skills course dedicated to the development of Microsoft’s next generation of trial lawyers. (2015)
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Activities

Bill serves as the Chicago Office Managing Partner and sits on the Firm’s Executive Committee, Finance Committee, Partner Compensation Committee, and Opportunity & Inclusion Committee. He previously served for eight years as the Chair of Winston’s Hiring Committee.

Bill is a Trustee and former Chair of the NALP Foundation for Law Career Research & Education, a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing the quality and delivery of legal services.

Bill previously served as the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the First Tee of Greater Chicago, an organization dedicated to teaching life skills through the game of golf to at-risk youth in the Chicagoland area.

“Bill O’Neil is best-in-class in terms of business partnership, communication and service. Highly recommended.”

The Legal 500 US

“Bill O’Neil is an outstanding attorney who helps make complex issues easier to understand and fights like a badger when we need it.”

The Legal 500 US

Credentials

EDUCATION

Bill received his B.A. from Denison University and his J.D. from Washington University - Saint Louis, where he served as editor of the *Washington University Law Review*.

ADMISSIONS

- Illinois

Related Insights & News

- Speaker, "Deals Gone Sideways: M&A Litigation in COVID-Churned Markets," May 28, 2020
- "Rep and Warranty Insurers Confront Coronavirus Risk," *The Wall Street Journal*, May 5, 2020
- "5 Lessons For Submitting A Successful R&W Insurance Claim," Law360, March 27, 2020
- "Top 10 Secrets of Success for Summer Associates," LexisNexis Practice Advisor, June 21, 2018
- "Defining 'Knowledge' In A Purchase Agreement, Law360, May 14, 2018
- Speaker, "Negotiating Favorable RWI Policies: *Lessons Learned From Litigating Claims*," July 16, 2017
- "Beware Risks of Using LinkedIn During Jury Selection," Law360, September 5, 2013
- "Achieving the Perceived Cost Savings and Expedience of Commercial Arbitration," The United States Law Week, October 26, 2010

RECOGNITIONS

Winston Team Led by Bill O'Neil Recognized in Litigator of the Week

APRIL 8, 2025

IN THE MEDIA

Bill O'Neil Discusses Overhaul of Delaware's Corporate Law with *Bloomberg Law*

APRIL 3, 2025

IN THE MEDIA

Bill O'Neil Featured in BRG's *M&A Disputes Report 2025* Discussing Macroeconomic Landscape for Deal Growth and Dispute Challenges

MARCH 25, 2025

RECOGNITIONS

Winston & Strawn Wins Three 2024 Law360 Practice Group of the Year Awards

JANUARY 20, 2025

RECOGNITIONS

Winston & Strawn Recognized in 2025 *Benchmark Litigation*

OCTOBER 3, 2024

RECOGNITIONS

Bill O’Neil Named Among *Crain’s Chicago Business*’ 2024 Notable Leaders in Accounting, Consulting & Law
SEPTEMBER 9, 2024

IN THE MEDIA

Bill O’Neil Named Chicago Office Managing Partner
JUNE 28, 2024

PRESS RELEASE

Winston & Strawn Names Bill O’Neil Chicago Office Managing Partner
JUNE 24, 2024

RECOGNITIONS

Winston & Strawn Recognized in *The Legal 500 U.S.* 2024
JUNE 12, 2024

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENT

Bill O’Neil Speaks at the 36th Annual Tulane Corporate Law Institute
MARCH 7, 2024

RECOGNITIONS

Winston Shortlisted for *Benchmark Litigation U.S.*’s 2024 Illinois Firm of the Year
JANUARY 8, 2024

ARTICLE

M&A Ruling Buoy Loss Calculation Method, R&W Insurance
NOVEMBER 6, 2023

Capabilities

Securities, M&A & Corporate Governance Litigation

Commercial Litigation & Disputes

Class Actions & Group Litigation

Public Companies

Representation & Warranty Insurance Claims

Insurance Litigation

Financial Services

Insurance

Professional Services

Automotive & Mobility