



## Denise Scofield

Partner

Houston

+1 713-651-2660

Dallas

+1 214-453-6516

**Denise Scofield is an experienced first chair trial lawyer providing trusted guidance to clients who face serious business problems. She uses her extensive knowledge of the energy and petrochemical industries to help her clients determine the best outcome possible and to execute a plan to deliver it. She is especially skilled at protecting her clients at the earliest stages of a crisis. By understanding what her clients will consider to be a win, Denise crafts a courtroom strategy with that result in mind.**

Head of the Litigation Practice for the Houston office, Denise represents clients in commercial, environmental, and mass tort disputes. With her deep understanding of the energy and petrochemical industries and the pressures they face, she is consulted by clients in all facets of those industries. She has experience on both sides of the docket and is adept at working with her clients to determine whether aggressive litigation or guided resolution is in their best interest.

Denise brings a unique perspective to each dispute, having worked in-house to assist a major oil and gas client with the integration of a significant amount of litigation after a large acquisition. She subsequently co-managed an oilfield

services client's large portfolio of litigation matters for many years, serving as lead counsel on cases involving commercial, environmental, mass and toxic tort, products and premises liability, and trade secret allegations pending in courts across the country. In addition, Denise has held national and regional coordinating counsel roles for clients facing environmental and mass tort litigation, often leading large teams to accomplish her clients' goals. Because of these experiences, she understands the bottom-line impact of litigation on her clients and is mindful of those financial implications by developing realistic cost estimates to ensure there are no surprises.

Denise has secured significant wins in cases critical to her clients, both through trial and motion practice and appeal. She successfully tried Phase One of the Deepwater Horizon litigation on behalf of an oilfield services client, winning her client's dismissal at the close of the plaintiffs' case. She recently defeated a mass tort case involving hexavalent chromium brought to national attention by Erin Brockovich. And she won a take-nothing judgment in a matter involving sophisticated deepwater well equipment that had industry-wide implications. Her creativity and special awareness of indemnity provisions and non-monetary settlement options that can bring a case to a less costly resolution frequently result in favorable outcomes for her clients outside of the courtroom.

## Key Matters

Denise's recent significant cases follow.

- Representing an **oilfield services company** in an indemnity dispute pending in Oklahoma federal court involving over US\$100M
- Representing an **American multinational conglomerate** in a matter seeking pre-suit discovery in Galveston, Texas against a mass tort plaintiffs' lawyer for use in investigating potential fraud
- Defeated a US\$275M breach of contract action brought by a major oil and gas operator against a **global oilfield equipment manufacturer** after two-week-long federal bench trial. The high-stakes case for the client had significant implications for the oil and gas industry. The Fifth Circuit upheld the win at the trial court level. Denise was twice recognized for her work on this matter by Am Law as a "Litigator of the Week" Runner-Up.
- Defeated a global insurance provider's petition for pre-suit discovery against a **valve manufacturer** in connection with an explosion at a plastics plant in south Texas involving US\$65M in insured losses and prevented the client from being sued
- Prevailed in a federal court action to set aside a US\$1.4B default judgment secured by a privately owned energy company against a **prominent foreign national** who had not been properly served with process
- Represented an **oilfield services company** in a hexavalent chromium contamination lawsuit brought by Midland, Texas residents after Erin Brockovich made allegations against the client on a national morning news program. Also represented the client in connection with the investigations led by the Environmental Protection Agency and Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. Secured the complete dismissal of the lawsuit when Texas' Eastland Court of Appeals issued mandamus relief and exonerated the client at the regulatory level.
- Representing the **former owner of a sand mine** located in rural Wisconsin in the defense of environmental and toxic tort claims
- For defendant, negotiated favorable resolution of a mass tort case involving a 20-day uncontrolled blowout of a gas well in South Texas, from which plaintiffs alleged there was a discharge of toxic hydrocarbons and carcinogenic gases that produced an environmental hazard damaging thousands of acres of property, surrounding waterways, livestock, and the plaintiffs' health

### PRO BONO

In a landmark case that included a four-week federal court trial, two Fifth Circuit rulings, and an eight-page statement from the U.S. Supreme Court, Denise was part of a team that secured the United States' first permanent injunction

requiring a prison to provide robust COVID-19 protections—including testing all inmates on a weekly basis—for a geriatric prison in Texas, earning the team a 2020 *National Law Journal* “Trailblazer Award for Crisis Leadership.”

## Recent Experience

Secured Settlement...

## Recognitions

- Listed, *The Best Lawyers in America*®, Litigation – Environmental, 2022–2024
  - Listed, *The Best Lawyers in America*®, Oil and Gas Law, 2022–2024
  - Listed, *The Best Lawyers in America*®, Commercial Litigation, 2023–2024
  - Listed, *The Best Lawyers in America*®, Mass Tort Litigation/Class Actions – Defendants, 2023–2024
  - Listed, *The Best Lawyers in America*®, Personal Injury Litigation – Defendants, 2023–2024
  - “Leading Lawyer,” *The Legal 500 US*, General Commercial Disputes, 2021–2023
  - “Key Lawyer,” *The Legal 500 US*, Product Liability, Mass Tort, and Class Action – Defense: Toxic Tort, 2021–2023
  - “Key Lawyer,” *The Legal 500 US*, Energy Litigation: Oil and Gas, 2021, 2023
  - Listed, *Lawdragon*; “500 Leading Litigators in America” for Commercial Litigation, Mass Tort, and Toxic Torts; 2024
  - Listed, “The *Lawdragon* Green 500: The 2024 Leaders in Environmental Law”
  - Listed, *Lawdragon*, “500 Leading Environmental Lawyers,” 2023
  - Listed, *Lawdragon*, “500 Leading Energy Lawyers,” 2023–2024
  - Named “Best Mentor” by *Texas Lawyer*’s Texas Legal Awards, 2022
  - Listed, *Lawdragon*, “500 Leading Environmental and Energy Lawyers,” 2021
  - Listed, *Texas Super Lawyers* (2005, 2007–2018)
  - Listed, “Rising Stars,” *Texas Super Lawyers* (2004–2005)
  - “Outstanding Young Lawyer of Texas,” 2003
  - “Outstanding Young Lawyer of Houston,” 2003
  - “Five Outstanding Young Texans,” Texas Jaycees, 2004
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# Activities

- Past-President, Houston Bar Association
  - Director, Texas Access to Justice Foundation
  - Past Chair and Trustee, Houston Bar Foundation
  - Director, Houston Urban Debate League
  - Past Director, State Bar of Texas
  - Past President, Houston Young Lawyers Association
  - Past Chair, Houston Young Lawyers Foundation
  - Charter Fellow, Houston Young Lawyers Association
  - Life Fellow, Houston Bar Foundation
  - Fellow, Texas Bar Foundation
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# Credentials

## EDUCATION

Denise received her B.A. from Vanderbilt University in 1989. She received her J.D. from Southern Methodist University in 1992.

## ADMISSIONS

- Texas

# Related Insights & News

## SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

- “Crisis Management and Emergency Response: Best Practices in the Energy industry,” The Texas Journal of Oil, Gas, and Energy Law Symposium, Feb. 2023
  - “The Past, Present and Future of Women in the Law,” Houston Bar Association Seminar, April 2021
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## RECOGNITIONS

Winston Attorneys Featured on the 2024

FEBRUARY 16, 2024

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## RECOGNITIONS

Winston Attorneys Featured on

FEBRUARY 2, 2024

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## RECOGNITIONS

Winston & Strawn Partners Recognized in 2024

SEPTEMBER 8, 2023

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## RECOGNITIONS

*Houston Business Journal* Names...

AUGUST 17, 2023

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## RECOGNITIONS

Winston Attorneys Recognized in *The Best Lawyers in America*

AUGUST 17, 2023

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## SEMINAR/CLE

Winston & Strawn's Product...

JUNE 14, 2023

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## RECOGNITIONS

Winston & Strawn Recognized in *The Legal 500*

JUNE 7, 2023

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## NEWS

2022 Pro Bono Impact...

MAY 1, 2023

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## CLIENT SUCCESS

Winston Acts as Lead...

APRIL 18, 2023

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## RECOGNITIONS

Winston Attorneys Recognized in Inaugural Edition of the

MARCH 17, 2023

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## RECOGNITIONS

Winston & Strawn Attorneys Recognized in *The Best Lawyers in America*

AUGUST 18, 2022

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## RECOGNITIONS

Winston & Strawn Attorneys...

JULY 25, 2022

# Capabilities

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Litigation/Trials	Commercial Litigation & Disputes	Class Actions & Group Litigation	
Environmental	Environmental Litigation & Enforcement	International Arbitration	
Privacy & Data Security	Energy	Energy Industry Litigation & Investigations	Oil & Gas
Technology, Media & Telecommunications	Medical Devices		