



DaWanna L. McCray-Allen

Associate

Chicago

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DaWanna represents major insurance companies, financial institutions, and other Fortune 500 corporations in complex litigation matters in federal and state courts across the nation, as well as in investigations. Through her cases, DaWanna has gained experience drafting briefing across all stages of litigation, taking and defending key depositions, leading internal investigations, and arguing vital motions. Prior to joining Winston, DaWanna served as a law clerk for the Honorable Tanya Walton Pratt in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Indiana. This experience provided invaluable insights into the judicial system, enabling DaWanna to grasp the intricacies of the legal process. She draws upon her judicial clerkship experience in her representation of clients.

Key Matters

- Served as Deputy Special Prosecutor in a special grand jury investigation and the highly publicized *People of the State of Illinois v. Jussie Smollett* trial, which resulted in victory and recognition in *The American Lawyer's* "Litigator of the Week" section.
- Served as the lead associate in a two-week arbitration. Vigorously and successfully defended the insurance company client against a US\$36M claim.
- Co-led a team that represented an indigent plaintiff in a three-day trial before a Central District of Illinois jury, where she sought money damages under Section 1983 on behalf of her client, who was physically attacked by an inmate and was not protected by the facility guards. Presented the opening and cross-examined the two defendants.
- Victoriously represented a pro bono client before the Office of Immigration Court in his quest for asylum in the U.S. and withholding of removal the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The client suffered severe torture, and his wife was murdered, merely because he carried out his role as a paralegal and helped represent political activists against the Congolese government's wishes. Managed all aspects of the Merits Hearing, including opening and closing statements, and the direct examination of the client.

Recent Experience

Winston Secures Favorable Settlement for Virtualization Company in 10-Patent Case

Recognitions

- *Best Lawyers: Ones to Watch® in America*, for Commercial Litigation, 2025
- Lawyers of Distinction – Excellence in Civil Litigation, 2022
- Winston & Strawn's Pro Bono Commitment to Service Award
- The National Black Lawyers' (NBL) "Top 40 Under 40," 2019
- Just the Beginning – A Pipeline Organization's 2023 5 Under 40 Legal Professionals

Activities

DaWanna is the past president of the Just the Beginning Associate Board, a pipeline organization that is aimed at inspiring young students and increasing diversity in the legal profession and judiciary. DaWanna also serves as a board member of Lawyers Lend-A-Hand to Youth, which uses the legal community's resources to promote mentoring and tutoring programs that support Chicago youth.

Credentials

EDUCATION

DaWanna received a J.D., *magna cum laude*, from the University of Illinois College of Law in 2016. She received a B.A. in political science from Spelman College in 2013.

At the University of Illinois College of Law, DaWanna served as a notes editor for *The Elder Law Journal*, a trial team member, and a student-attorney in the Civil Litigation Clinic and the Family Advocacy Clinic where she was provisionally admitted to represent clients in state court pursuant to Illinois Supreme Court Rule 711.

Because of DaWanna's effective representation of her clients, she received the most prestigious award granted by the College of Law—a Rickert Award for Excellence in Advocacy. During law school, DaWanna also earned recognition on the Dean's List and as a Harno scholar.

ADMISSIONS

- Illinois

CLERKSHIPS

- USDC - Southern District of IN for the Honorable Tanya Walton Pratt
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Related Insights & News

RECOGNITIONS

Winston Attorneys Recognized in *Best Lawyers: Ones to Watch® in America* 2025

AUGUST 15, 2024

BLOG

Winston Hosts Annual 1L LCLD Scholars Roundtable

JUNE 17, 2024

BLOG

AI Transforms the National and International Regulatory Landscape

MAY 23, 2024

BLOG

Should the Ninth Circuit's Waiver Test Be More Closely Scrutinized?

AUGUST 18, 2023

BLOG

Winston's Fourth Class of Protégés Graduates from D&I Associate Sponsorship Program

MAY 25, 2023

BLOG

The Class Action Fairness Act Does Not Supersede the Federal Arbitration Act

JUNE 9, 2022

RECOGNITIONS

Dan Webb Named *The American Lawyer's* Litigator of the Week

DECEMBER 17, 2021

BLOG

Federal Circuit Affirms *MV3 v. Roku*

DECEMBER 8, 2021

BLOG

Ninth Circuit Decision Upholding Mandatory Arbitration Agreements as Condition of Employment is Stayed

NOVEMBER 9, 2021

PRO BONO IN ACTION

Federal Court Certifies Class in Lawsuit Challenging Excessive Solitary Confinement in Illinois Prisons

JUNE 16, 2021

PODCAST

Podcast Trial Alert: *VLSI Technologies v. Intel II* — The Verdict and Post-Trial Takeaways

APRIL 28, 2021

PODCAST

Podcast Trial Alert: *VLSI Technologies v. Intel II* — Jury Trial Day 6

APRIL 21, 2021

Capabilities

Appellate & Critical Motions

Litigation/Trials

Product Liability & Mass Torts

Government Investigations, Enforcement & Compliance

Antitrust/Competition

Government Program Fraud, False Claims Act & Qui Tam Litigation

Insurance Litigation

Public Companies

Health Care

Financial Services

Technology, Media & Telecommunications