



Robert J. Balch

Principal
Vice-Chair, Casualty Litigation Department

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Litigates matters involving complex issues and catastrophic damages. Representative clients include universities, sports and entertainment facilities, large retailers, insurance companies, product manufacturers and distributors, multi-national corporations, and commercial landowners. Certified mediator and state-wide counsel for multiple corporations and insurance companies.

Bio

Robert J. Balch is a Principal and Vice-Chair of the firm's Casualty Litigation Department and Chair of the firm's Liquor Liability Practice Group. He litigates matters which involve complex issues and catastrophic injuries and damages. His representative clients include universities, sports and entertainment facilities, large retailers, insurance companies, product manufacturers and distributors, multi-national corporations, and commercial landowners.

Mr. Balch maintains an active tort liability practice. His representative clients include universities; country clubs and pools; retailers; commercial landowners; service providers; youth athletic leagues; management companies; and sports and entertainment venues large and small.

Mr. Balch's products liability practice includes the defense of national and international manufacturers and distributors sued for civil damages stemming from consumer products, medical devices, manufacturing equipment, and automobiles alleged to have been defective and caused injury. He is often retained to oversee and conduct investigations before civil litigation commences, including most recently a multi-state investigation involving an international consumer product manufacturer. He has been recognized as a Super Lawyer Rising Star each year since 2013 in the area of Products Liability Defense.

Mr. Balch is often retained to oversee and conduct investigations before civil litigation commences, overseeing investigations into catastrophic losses and workplace injuries, and most recently, coordinating a multi-state investigation involving an international consumer product manufacturer.

As Chair of the firm's Liquor Liability Practice Group, Mr. Balch has successfully defended bars, restaurants, casinos, fraternal organizations, colleges, clubs, and property owners from allegations of improper alcohol service, lax security, hazing, and criminal conduct by patrons, employees, and guests. He presents frequently on trends and changes which impact the alcohol service industry and works closely with clients on developing and improving alcohol service policies and procedures. He has achieved

Practices

- Appellate
- Casualty Litigation
- Liquor Liability Litigation
- Premises Liability Litigation
- Commercial Transportation Litigation
- Hospitality and Retail
- Alternative Dispute Resolution

Industries

- Manufacturing
- Commercial Transportation
- Municipal & Government

Education

- J.D., Rutgers University School of Law, 2006
- B.S. in Labor Industrial Relations, Pennsylvania State University, 2002
Business/Economics minor

Bar Memberships

- New Jersey (2006)
- Pennsylvania (2006)

Court Admissions

- Supreme Court of Pennsylvania
- Supreme Court of New Jersey
- U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania
- U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania
- U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey

numerous orders and opinions from the Court narrowing the scope of claims against alcoholic service providers in Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

Certified in advanced mediation training and tactics, Mr. Balch frequently engages in ADR in support of his clients' interests and has served as an arbitrator and neutral. He is an approved mediator in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

Prior to obtaining his law degree, Mr. Balch worked in management for a multi-state utility company, supervising a team of unionized field employees in New York City. He entered law school and worked full-time while completing his law degree, including serving as a law clerk to a Superior Court Judge in Warren County (NJ). Outside of the office, Mr. Balch serves as an elected officer of a non-profit community organization, a volunteer youth coach and youth league commissioner.

Mr. Balch has been recognized as a Super Lawyer Rising Star each year since 2013. In 2017, he was named to *Lehigh Valley Business'* "Forty Under 40," an annual list that recognizes, "the Greater Lehigh Valley's most accomplished young businessmen and women who share a commitment to business growth, professional excellence, and to the community." Also in 2017, he was named a SelectLawyer by *Lehigh Valley Style* magazine. In 2023, he was named by *Lehigh Valley Business* to the publication's Power List for Law. For information about these selections and an overview of common third-party publications, rankings, and list methodologies, [click here](#).

Mr. Balch is active in providing volunteer legal services and received the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania's Pro Bono Roll of Honor award for the services he provided to members of the community who were unable to afford legal representation. His most recent pro bono assignments resulted in a dismissal of all charges and a defense verdict for his clients.

Representative Cases

- Defense verdict in Dram Shop liability action on behalf of country club sued for alleged over-service of a patron, who after leaving the premises, struck two individuals, resulting in dual fatalities. Pre-trial settlement demand was in the mid-seven figures and punitive damages were at issue.
- Defense verdict in consumer fraud action in State of New Jersey involving alleged "upselling" and fraudulent dealing.
- Defense verdict in products liability matter involving forklift manufacturer arising out of workplace accident at a national chain distribution center which resulted in the near amputation of the lower leg.
- Jury verdict in favor of corporate client on breach of contract action, resulting in repayment of all requested compensatory damages, attorneys' fees, and costs incurred by the client after several day trial.
- Defense verdict in binding arbitration on behalf of a client who struck a pedestrian in the roadway while traveling at 45 mph, resulting in catastrophic injuries. There was a policy limit settlement demand prior to the parties agreeing to submit to binding arbitration.
- Dismissal of premises liability matter involving the collapse of a sliding glass door, resulting in severe neck injuries to the plaintiff, after aggressive early motion practice established client was shielded from liability due to statutory immunity.
- Achieved dismissal by motion at the pleading stage in a dram shop claim involving claims of punitive damages and catastrophic injuries having

successfully challenged the basis for client's joinder in the case and prematurity of indemnity claim.

- Dismissal by summary judgment and declaratory judgment in a forklift injury case in which client was awarded repayment of all attorneys' fees and indemnity from a defendant joined to the case by Mr. Balch's client.
- Successfully defended products liability suit involving alleged defective electric heater, achieving a nominal settlement and securing repayment of the settlement amount and all costs and attorneys' fees from co-defendant through prosecution of cross-claim.
- Dismissal of police department and officer from federal civil rights action after aggressive motion practice and without need for costly discovery.
- Dismissal by summary judgment on behalf of commercial tenant in New Jersey over opposition of other parties in litigation stemming from slip-and-fall in parking area allegedly controlled by client.
- Obtained several favorable rulings narrowing scope of liquor liability exposure in both Pennsylvania and New Jersey.
- Jury verdict in favor of corporate client on breach of contract action, resulting in repayment of all requested compensatory damages, attorneys' fees, and costs incurred by client after several day trial.

Decisions

- *Gutierrez v. Officine Meccaniche Giovanni Cerutti, SpA, et al.*, 2014 WL 6969579 (E.D. Pa., December 9, 2014) (dismissal of Italian product manufacturer based on lack of personal jurisdiction in catastrophic personal injury case brought by Pennsylvania citizen)
- *Diskin v. Ajax Tocco Magathermic, et al.*, (Northampton County, PA, Oct. 10, 2013) (dismissal of Swiss product manufacturer based on lack of personal jurisdiction in multi-plaintiff catastrophic personal injury case)

Presentations

- Co-Presenter, "Dram Shop Liability Defense and Risk Management: Avoiding a Liability Hangover," Pennsylvania Restaurant & Lodging Association (PR&LA) Webinar (August 21, 2019)
- Co-Presenter, "Pennsylvania Dram Shop Defense: Avoiding a Risk and Liability Hangover," Lancaster Chamber of Commerce, Lancaster, PA (May 25, 2017)
- Panelist, "The Injury Evaluation Process - What's New?," Verisk Insurance Solution's Claims Summit 2016, Jersey City, NJ (September 28, 2016)
- Co-Presenter, "Pennsylvania Dram Shop Defense: Avoiding a Risk and Liability Hangover," PR&LA Meeting, Allentown, PA (April 12, 2016)
- Co-Presenter, "Managing a Catastrophic Loss: From Accident Response Through Litigation," Continuing Education Seminar Co-Sponsored by Dallas-Fort Worth Chapter of RIMS, Dallas, TX (June 11, 2015)
- Presenter, "Is It Safe to Look? Issues and Strategies for Being an Ethical Social Media 'Peeping Tom'," CLE program hosted by the Philadelphia Association of Defense Counsel (PADC), Philadelphia, PA (May 20, 2014)

Affiliations

- Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board - Licensed Entity Representative
- Pennsylvania Defense Institute
- Pennsylvania Restaurant & Lodging Association (PR&LA)
- Villanova University Charles Widger School of Law – Recruitment and Mock Trial Volunteer

Pro Bono

- Recipient of Pro Bono Roll of Honor, First Judicial District of Pennsylvania
- Philadelphia Mortgage Foreclosure Diversion Pilot Program Volunteer