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LOS ANGELES

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PRACTICE AREAS

Litigation

General Business & Complex
Commercial Litigation

Investigations & White-Collar
Defense

Accountant Liability & Risk
Management

Securities Law

COURT MEMBERSHIPS

- Texas
- California
- New York
- U.S. Supreme Court
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the
Ninth Circuit
- U.S. District Court for the Eastern
District of California

Mike Piazza

Partner | mike.piazza@lathrooggpm.com

When asked about his approach to practicing law, Mike said, "I try to embody the full meaning of being a legal counselor. Even when clients have a potential legal matter that is not within my competencies, I will help them find the right lawyer to address their needs." He said, "I take my responsibilities very seriously and bring my best effort every day to the legal needs of clients." One client said, "Mike Piazza is one of the most professional and unrelenting attorneys I have experienced in my life. He helped overturn a complicated and entirely unwarranted attack from both the SEC and DOJ. I would ask for his help again in a heartbeat!"

Mike Piazza is a litigator with extensive experience in white collar defense, securities litigation, complex commercial litigation, bet-the-company business disputes, and accountant liability. He represents individuals and companies entangled in complex and high-profile legal disputes.

With a focus on regulatory compliance, investigations, dispute resolution, and trial representation, Mike counsels financial services, private equity funds, health care, utilities, retail, hospitality and real estate development clients on:

- Anti-corruption policies
- Class actions
- Complex commercial trials and arbitrations
- Compliance programs
- Global and domestic investigations and anti-corruption laws
- Policy development and training



- U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California
- U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California
- U.S. District Court for the Western District of California
- U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York
- U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Texas
- U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Texas
- U.S. District Court for the Western District of Texas

EDUCATION

University of Minnesota Law School, J.D., *magna cum laude*, 1987

- Order of the Coif

Carleton College, B.A., *cum laude*, 1983

- Privacy law compliance
- Risk assessments
- Sanctions law compliance and risk assessments, domestic and foreign
- SEC enforcement defense
- Securities litigation
- Whistleblower complaints
- White collar defense and investigations

When counseled by Mike, clients have a strategic advisor who leverages his deep experience with SEC policies and investigation priorities to anticipate regulatory moves and adapt defense strategies. His tenure as former Regional Trial Counsel for the U.S. SEC's Los Angeles Regional Office further informs his understanding and strategic approach to regulatory compliance and dispute resolution, making him a formidable ally to clients facing regulatory scrutiny.

A CEO client said, "What makes Mike special is he truly understands business. He has represented me and the companies where I have worked. He provides counsel and an understanding of the law and is great at looking at situations from multiple angles to get the best outcome."

Mike's approach is tailored to mitigate risks, safeguard reputations and preserve clients' financial health, providing thoughtful legal defense and strategic guidance. A partner in Lathrop GPM's Litigation Group, he is proficient in handling intricate cases related to allegations brought by U.S. regulatory authorities including state attorneys general, the Department of Justice (DOJ), Securities & Exchange Commission (SEC), the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC), the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board (PCOAB), and foreign regulatory authorities for allegations of:

- '33 Act, '34 Act, and '40 Act violations
- Accounting fraud, liability and misrepresentation
- Antitrust and competition issues

- Audit failures
- Compliance failures
- Corporate fraud
- Hedge fund fraud
- Insider trading
- Market manipulation
- Offering fraud
- Securities fraud
- Shareholder disputes
- Trade practice violations

Mike also advises clients on compliance with the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, the UK Bribery Act, AML statutes, OFAC, and other anti-corruption laws and regulations worldwide.

An authoritative white-collar defense voice, Mike is regularly quoted by the *Wall Street Journal*, *Financial Times*, *Bloomberg*, *Law360* and *Capitol Matters*, a newsletter for private equity firms, bankers, and other financial institutions.

REPRESENTATIVE EXPERIENCE

- Defending a public company CEO in parallel DOJ and SEC insider trading investigations arising from a 10b-5 trading plan.
- Defended a private equity fund in an SEC investigation and obtained closure of the investigation with no enforcement recommendation.
- Defended former officers of a large utility company in securities class and derivative actions.
- Defended a private equity fund founder through an SEC whistleblower investigation.
- Defended a Midwest-based investment advisor against potential claims related to alleged malfeasance by the deceased founder of the firm; guided the firm through self-reporting to the SEC which resulted in no enforcement action by the staff.
- Defended three outside directors of a mutual fund in an SEC investigation by the SEC's San Francisco Regional Office; no liability findings against the directors.

- Defended a California real estate developer and their private equity fund in an SEC investigation by the Los Angeles Regional Office and obtained closure of the investigation with no enforcement recommendation.
- Defended San Diego real estate developers in an SEC investigation by the Los Angeles Regional Office; obtained closure of the investigation within six months from inception with no enforcement recommendation.
- Defended two individuals in an SEC investigation by the SEC's Chicago Regional Office concerning an alleged violation of an SEC Bar Order; after a pre-Wells Notice meeting, the staff was persuaded to close the investigation with no enforcement recommendation despite their threat that a Wells Notice was "imminent."
- Defended a Dallas-based hedge fund manager and their fund in connection with an investigation by the SEC's New York Regional Office; obtained closure of the investigation with no enforcement recommendation.
- Represented three independent outside directors in an SEC investigation into alleged accounting fraud; obtained declinations for all three directors.
- Represented 14 current and former officers and directors of an Asian gaming company against securities fraud claims; obtained dismissal of all claims from district court, affirmed on appeal.
- Represented a C-level executive of an internet marketing company in trade practice matter concerning the use of negative options in internet marketing.
- Represented a C-level executive from inception of an SEC investigation through jury verdict in securities fraud matter.
- Defended a SoCal-based hedge fund and two individual fund managers targeted in a joint SEC, DOJ, and Houston District Attorney investigation; negotiated global settlement with no criminal charges.
- Defended an individual in the New York pension fund pay-to-play scandal (separate SEC, DOJ, and NY Attorney General investigations); obtained early, favorable plea deal.

WHEN ASKED ...

Why did you become a lawyer?

I became a lawyer because I believe in the importance of the rule of law and how that core tenet differentiates the United States from many other countries. I am passionate about my work because of the clients I represent. The increasing scope of government regulation touching many aspects of business activity has created a situation where more law-abiding businesses and individuals find themselves targeted in regulatory and law enforcement investigations initiated by aggressive regulators and prosecutors. This can be an overwhelming and frightening situation for clients. I strive to give them the best possible reputation while simultaneously helping them manage the pressure of dealing with an ongoing government investigation or lawsuit.

What do you do outside of work?

I travel as much as I can. I have been to six of the seven continents with only Antarctica left on the list. I recently traveled to Egypt, South Africa, and Greenland. I enjoy learning about diverse cultures, cooking, and perfecting my smoked brisket skills. I am a beekeeper, maintaining several hives at my Hill Country of Texas home. I also enjoy watching and following many forms of motorsports, particularly Formula One, IndyCar, and Moto GP.

In The News

- Bloomberg Law Features Addition of Mike Piazza to Lathrop GPM's Litigation & Dispute Resolution Team
April 17, 2024
- Securities Docket Features New Lathrop GPM Partner Mike Piazza
April 17, 2024

News Releases

- Nationally Recognized White Collar Litigator Mike Piazza Joins Lathrop GPM as a Partner in Dallas
April 16, 2024

Professional Affiliations

- Association of Securities and Exchange Commission Alumni (ASECA), Member

- Dallas Bar Association, Member
- Los Angeles County Bar Association, Member
- Orange County Bar Association, Member

Honors

- Selected among *The Best Lawyers in America*®, 2021-2024
- *Thomson Reuters*, "Southern California Super Lawyers," 2011-2020
- *Law360*, "10 Most Admired Securities Attorneys," 2010
- Litigation Counsel of America, Fellow, 2008