Mara H. Cohara

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PRACTICE AREAS

Product Liability & Tort Litigation

Contaminants & Toxic Tort

Class Action Defense

Organizational Misconduct

Odor Nuisance

PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances)

INDUSTRIES

Cannabis

Agribusiness & Food

COURT MEMBERSHIPS

- Missouri
- Kansas
- U.S. District Court of Kansas
- U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri
- U.S. District Court for the Western District of Missouri

According to her clients, Mara is "a responsive, professional and thorough communicator. She listens and understands, is practical and collaborative." One client said Mara is "the gold standard" for outside counsel and should "teach a course in client service." Mara says, "I have a client-first philosophy and believe that's the way it should always be."

A defense attorney for manufacturing, agribusiness, religious and educational organizations, Mara Cohara is the leader of the Tort, Insurance Recovery and Environmental Practice Group and a member of the firm's Executive Committee. A skilled litigator and advisor, Mara is known for her client service and responsiveness to clients' needs. She's also known for listening to clients, implementing a customized approach to their legal matters, and collaborating with them so she can identify legal solutions that are in their best interest.

Mara handles cases involving toxic torts, nuisance, product liability, premises liability, contracts, breach of warranty, consumer protection litigation, and the defense of religious and educational institutions. She often defends odor nuisance cases arising from auto plants, industrial farms, feed lots, industrial facilities, and mills, and defends claims for some of the world's largest manufacturers and distributors. Mara has considerable experience coordinating large-scale bet-the-company matters, conducting internal investigations, and defending high-profile lawsuits that attract media and community attention such as:

- Odor Nuisance Litigation: Individual Claimants to Class Actions
- Religious Institutions as Defendants

EDUCATION

University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law, J.D., *with distinction*, 2001

- UMKC Honor Society, Order of the Bench and Robe Award, 2001
- *UMKC Law Review*, Note and Comment Editor
- Special President's Award, UMKC Law Alumni Association
- UMKC Student Bar Association, President, 2000-2001

University of Missouri-Columbia, B.S., *summa cum laude*, 1998

- Breach of Warranty
- National Coordinating Counsel
- Consumer Protection Litigation

With an established record of bringing adversarial parties to agreement, Mara is an effective and efficient advocate throughout the litigation process. She often secures summary judgment dismissals, discovery victories and favorable settlements for her clients. Her reputation is built on resolving issues and her take-charge attitude.

Mara enjoys serving clients in a coordinating counsel role. She provides straightforward and intentional guidance using her finely-honed problem-solving and solutions-oriented approach, and client service skills. She is collaborative, empathetic and prioritizes staying on top of clients' businesses and industry trends and proactively providing clients with ideas, opportunities and solutions to legal and other potential business challenges.

With strong community ties, Mara is active in dozens of civic and legal organizations. She serves on the Kansas City Sports Commission and Foundation Board of Directors. She is on Park University's Board of Trustees and chairs the Trusteeship Committee. She is on the Latino Coalition Board and is the Co-Founder and Co-Chair of the Lantz Welch Citizen Brigade. Her support of Operation Breakthrough has earned her the election of lifetime member of Lawyers Encouraging Academic Performance (LEAP) board.

According to Mara, "I don't simply tell clients how to solve their problems; I work in collaboration with them to identify the best approach and the best solutions. I take time to understand their goals and needs, and to identify the solutions that are most effective and efficient. I take each client issue seriously and make sure we have the right person on the team to manage each matter. Identifying a client team is as much about legal skill and prowess as it is about culture and fit, while achieving the resolutions that are in the best interest of each client."

WHEN ASKED …

Why did you become a lawyer?

My parents were hardworking and set an example for me to push myself to always do more than expected. In fact, my fifth-grade yearbook says that when I grow up, I want to be an "attorney." I always wanted to make a difference, and being a lawyer has allowed me to do that for clients and the community. I also enjoy connecting people and helping them to solve problems.

What do you do outside of work?

I am the proud mother to two young athletes. I enjoy watching them compete in and grow through soccer and volleyball. I'm also a running enthusiast. I love to travel, and I enjoy time with family and friends.

REPRESENTATIVE EXPERIENCE

National Coordinating Counsel

- Serving as litigation counsel for one of the largest meat-processing companies in the U.S. The relationship began with the Lathrop GPM team successfully defending this client in a dozen odor nuisance cases in Missouri and subsequent insurance coverage litigation. Over the past decade, Mara has deepened this relationship and now coordinates the firm's work for this client, which ranges from advice on environmental compliance issues, tort claims and accident investigations, business disputes, and continuing work on actual and threatened odor nuisance matters.
- Managing the firm's relationship with a Canadian-based agricultural technology company with operations in the U.S. Mara strategizes with the client to assist in executing their aggressive growth strategy and coordinates with Lathrop GPM's subject matter experts.
- Overseeing the firm's relationship with and work for religious institutions across the county in connection with the investigation, defense and prevention of sexual misconduct claims.
- Serving as panel counsel for a Fortune 500 diesel engine and powertrain automotive component power leader on a wide variety of litigation from national class actions to large fleet warranty disputes to serious personal injury accidents, and commercial

litigation.

- Managing the firm's relationship with a major manufacturer of steel storage tanks. The firm handles a variety of matters such as breach of contract disputes, licensing agreements, non-compete agreements, responding to business records subpoenas, risk management and product manual reviews, and employment issues.
- Serving as litigation counsel and co-relationship partner for a privately held tool and equipment retailer.

Odor Nuisance Litigation: Individual Claimants to Class Actions

- Assisted a national pulp and paper manufacturing company in responding to claims related to the alleged noxious odors from a facility in Georgia. Quickly after the plaintiffs filed a class action lawsuit against the client, Mara resolved the matter by getting it dismissed with prejudice.
- Defended a national pulp and paper manufacturing company against allegations that one of its mills along a river was releasing toxic chemicals and odor into the atmosphere, causing damage to plaintiffs' health and property. The state supreme court ultimately denied certification for two appeals.
- Worked with a team of lawyers to defeat class certification on behalf of a national auto manufacturer in an environmental odor nuisance case which would have included more than 13,000 residences and spanned over twenty-four square miles.
- Represented a waste management company in two class actions. Both matters were dismissed, one of which was dismissed without prejudice, on motion of the Plaintiffs, following discovery, which was prior to class certification briefing.
- Represented an agricultural and food production company in multiple cases involving 280 plaintiffs who brought claims regarding odor nuisance, emanating from hog farms across Missouri. The representation involved more than ten cases and three that went to trial.
- Defended a large animal agriculture company in multiple nuisance cases. The firm worked with state communities and the state legislature to redefine Missouri's nuisance law for both temporary and permanent nuisance.
- Provided a cross-functional team to address a personal injury claim filed against a family-owned livestock operation. Obtained a confidential settlement following a successful mediation process. In

addition, secured coverage from the insurance company which resulted in full coverage of the settlement and defense costs.

- Defended a multinational food company against several hundred claims that the company's hog barns created a nuisance. Achieved two defense verdicts prior to settlement of the remaining claims.

Religious Institutions as Defendants

- Served as lead trial counsel in a multi-defendant lawsuit in which an adult plaintiff claimed he was assaulted during a counseling session that took place when he was a minor. The district court dismissed the claim, finding it was barred by the Kansas Statute of Repose, and the Kansas Court of Appeals affirmed. *See F.M. Doe v. Popravak, et al.*, Case No. 16-115282 (Kan. Ct. App. Jun. 9, 2017).
- Defended a large religious institution against claims arising from allegations of abuse. Mara's team's strategy led to a complete dismissal of all claims at the earliest possible stage before the district court. The dismissal was affirmed on appeal.
- Settled a claim following a three-week jury trial in which a single plaintiff was seeking more than $10 million alleging sexual abuse against a religious institution. Settled thirty-one other claims for less than the demand in the initial case.
- Obtained dismissals of more than one hundred claims against religious organization clients and has helped develop a body of law that strengthens available defense to religious organizations.
- Represented a diocese in a group settlement of fifty-two claims and a subsequent group settlement of thirty-two claims.

Automotive Component Manufacturers & Brach of Warranty

- Serves as litigation counsel for a Fortune 500 diesel engine and powertrain automotive component power leader, handling numerous product liability and personal injury lawsuits, investigations and breach of warranty claims.
- Assists internal experts at a Fortune 500 diesel engine and powertrain automotive component power leader in drafting warranty language, working with the implementation and operation of warranty programs, and tracking applicable state warranty laws across the United States.
- Represented a major equipment manufacturer in a large breach of warranty matter involving an Original Engineering Manufacturer

(OEM), incorporating the client's engines in their heating equipment. The firm conducted a thorough investigation and mediations, which resulted in a favorable settlement for the client, who was pleased with the outcome.

Events

- State of Litigation: Football Draft Edition
  April 12, 2023
- Exploring PFAS in Food
  May 5, 2021
- State of Litigation Virtual Event Series
  Session 1 - Thursday, July 16; Session 2 - Thursday, July 23; Session 3 - Thursday, July 30
- 2019 State of Litigation
  June 6, 2019

Presentations

- Co-presenter, "Pre-Game: Welcome Remarks," Lathrop GPM 2023 State of Litigation: Draft Event, April 12, 2023
- Presenter, "Promotion and Compensation: a Woman's Perspective," Women's Trial Institute, (AWL) Association for Women Lawyers of Greater KC, April 6, 2023
- Presenter, "Unexpectedly Merging in a Pandemic: An Integration Success Story," Federation of Defense and Corporate Counsel, July 14, 2021
- Co-presenter, "Managing Your Company's Environmental Legal Risk: What You Need to Know," Association of Corporate Counsel - Mid-America Chapter, April 7, 2021
- Speaker, "Ethics Considerations for Attorney-Client Privilege & Attorney Work Product," Association of Corporate Counsel - Mid-America Chapter, May 2017
- Panelist, "Film and the Law Series: Flash of Genius," University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law, June 2015
- Speaker, "Trends and Issues Currently Pending in Missouri and Kansas," Association of Corporate Counsel - Mid-America Chapter, April 2014
- Speaker, "Value Billing," Association of Corporate Counsel - Mid-America Chapter, 2012

Publications

- Co-author, "Why 2021 Could Be a Year Like No Other for PFAS," DRI - For the Defense, June 2021 Issue
- Author, "Will 2021 Be Remembered for a PFAS Sea Change?" Federation of Defense & Corporate Counsel, Insight, Spring 2021 Issue
- Co-author, "Food Packaging Emerges as PFAS Battleground," Food Industry Executive, May 24, 2021
- Co-author, "Defending Against Pandemic-Related Lawsuits," Ingram's Magazine, May 2020

Client Alerts And Blog Posts

- Far-Reaching Executive Order Pushes Toward National “Right to Repair”
  July 14, 2021
- Tort Alert: Recent Dismissals of COVID-19 Lawsuits Provide Lessons for Businesses Reopening
  September 16, 2020
- Missouri Aims to Weed out Meritless Punitive Damage Claims and Reign in Consumer Protection Claims
  May 22, 2020

In The News

- For the Defense Features Article by Mara Cohara and Ally Cunningham on PFAS Regulations and Litigation
  June 2021
- Insights Features Article by Mara Cohara on Changing PFAS Regulation
  Spring 2021
- Food industry Executive Features Article by Mara Cohara, Ally Cunningham and Matt Walker
  May 24, 2021
- Inside TSCA Features Article on PFAS in Food Based on Recent Lathrop GPM Webinar
  May 13, 2021
- McKnight's Long-Term Care News Quotes Mara Cohara on COVID-19 Litigation
  September 4, 2020

- Ingram's Magazine Features Article by Mara Cohara and Eric Swan on COVID-19 Related Lawsuits
  May 2020
- Business Class News Interviews Mara Cohara and Eric Swan on Mitigating Litigation Risks as Businesses Reopen
  May 14, 2020
- CFO Dive Quotes Mara Cohara on Tort Risks
  April 29, 2020
- Dallas Morning News Quotes Mara Cohara on Employees Returning to Work
  April 29, 2020
- Mara Cohara, Rosalee McNamara, and Dale Werts Profiled in Kansas City Business Journal's Best of Bar Special Issue
  October 25, 2019
- Mara Cohara Selected as an Ingram's Magazine's 50 Missourians You Should Know
  March 1, 2019
- KCBJ: Four Lathrop Gage Attorneys Selected as Best of the Bar in 2015
  September 25, 2015
- Mara Cohara co-chairs LEAP Back to School Breakfast
  August 1, 2014
- Missouri Lawyers Weekly: Jury Rules in Favor of Firm Client in Hog Farm Lawsuit
  July 19, 2011
- Trenton Republican-Times: Jury Rules in Favor of Firm Client in Hog Farm Lawsuit
  June 24, 2011

News Releases

- Lathrop GPM Attorneys Named 2023 Missouri & Kansas Super Lawyers and Rising Stars
  December 11, 2023
- Eight Lathrop GPM Attorneys Named Lawyer of the Year, 89 Ranked as The Best Lawyers in America©
  August 17, 2023
- Lathrop GPM LLP Hosts Diverse Professionals Network Retreat
  June 21, 2023
- 14 Lathrop GPM LLP Practice Groups and 35 Attorneys Ranked in Chambers USA 2023

June 1, 2023

- Mara Cohara Recognized as Top Business Defender on Missouri Power List for Third Consecutive Year
  May 16, 2023
- Lathrop GPM Hosts 2023 State of Litigation Conference at Arrowhead Stadium
  March 9, 2023
- Lathrop GPM Attorneys Named 2022 Missouri & Kansas Super Lawyers and Rising Stars
  November 14, 2022
- Six Lathrop GPM Attorneys Named Lawyer of the Year, 95 Ranked as The Best Lawyers in America©
  August 18, 2022
- Mara Cohara Named to Missouri Power List for Business Defense
  June 14, 2022
- Chambers USA 2022 Names Lathrop GPM a Top Law Firm, Franchise Group Ranked Nationwide
  June 1, 2022
- Lathrop GPM PFAS Team Honored in Top Legal Innovations Awards by Missouri Lawyers Media
  December 8, 2021
- Mara Cohara Honored as a Top Woman Executive in Kansas City
  November 22, 2021
- Missouri & Kansas Super Lawyers Recognizes 30 Lathrop GPM Attorneys
  November 16, 2021
- Seven Lathrop GPM Attorneys Named Lawyer of the Year, 100 Ranked as The Best Lawyers in America©
  August 19, 2021
- Mara Cohara Named to Missouri Power List for Business Defense
  June 2, 2021
- Chambers USA 2021 Names Lathrop GPM a Top Law Firm, Franchise Group Ranked Nationwide
  May 20, 2021
- Missouri & Kansas Super Lawyers Recognizes 34 Lathrop GPM Attorneys
  November 16, 2020
- Lathrop GPM Attorneys Named to The Best Lawyers in America©, Lawyer of the Year, and Ones to Watch for 2021
  August 20, 2020

- Mara Cohara Honored in Women Who Mean Business
  June 18, 2020
- Missouri & Kansas Super Lawyers Recognizes 42 Lathrop Gage Attorneys
  November 13, 2019
- Three Lathrop Gage Partners Among Kansas City's Best of the Bar
  August 29, 2019
- Super Lawyers Recognizes 47 Lathrop Gage Attorneys in Missouri and Kansas
  November 14, 2018
- Three Lathrop Gage Partners Named Among Kansas City Business Journal's Best of the Bar
  August 30, 2018
- Lathrop Gage Announces 2018 Executive Committee Members
  July 23, 2018
- Super Lawyers Recognizes 57 Attorneys from Lathrop Gage in Missouri and Kansas
  November 9, 2017
- Lathrop Gage Obtains Women in Law Empowerment Forum's 2015 Certification
  June 25, 2015
- Four Lathrop Gage Partners Honored as Best of the Bar
  September 26, 2014
- Super Lawyers Recognizes 71 Lathrop Gage Attorneys
  October 14, 2013
- Lathrop Gage Promotes Six Attorneys to Partner Status
  January 5, 2009
- Lathrop Gage Hosts Santa Snow Ball for LAKC
  November 26, 2008

Professional Affiliations

- Kansas City Sports Commission & Foundation, Board of Directors
- Federation of Defense & Corporate Counsel
  - Chair, Toxic Tort and Environmental Law Section, 2023-Present
  - Missouri State Representative, 2023-Present
  - Vice Chair, Toxic Tort and Environmental Law Section, 2019-2022

- National Diocesan Attorneys Association, 2002-Present
- Kansas City Metropolitan Bar Association Foundation, 2013-2016; Legal Advisor to the Foundation Board of Directors, 2015-2016; Foundation Secretary, 2016-2017; Foundation Treasurer, 2017 - 2018
- DRI, Women in Law, Toxic Torts & Environmental Law, and Product Liability Sections, 2014-Present
- Kansas City Association for Women Lawyers, 2002-Present
- Platte County Bar Association, 2010-Present
- Northland Regional Chamber of Commerce, 2012-2020
- Agricultural Business Council of Kansas City, 2010-2017
- Lawyers Association of Kansas City/YLS, President, 2008-2009; President-Elect, 2007
- American Bar Association, Tort Litigation Section, 2007-Present
- American Lung Association, Leadership Counsel, 2012-2014
- UMKC
  - Law School Alumni Association
    - Law Foundation Board, 2013-Present
    - Immediate Past President, 2013-2014
    - President, 2012-2013
    - VP/President-Elect, 2011-2012
    - Secretary/Treasurer, 2010-2011
    - Director of Membership, 2006-2008
    - Board of Directors, 2004-2005
  - Law School Foundation
    - Executive Officer, Vice President for Alumni and Constituent Relations, 2012-2013;
    - Member, 2013-Present
  - Inns of UMKC, Coordinating Master, 2004-2005; Inn Master 2007-2008

Community Involvement

- Lantz Welch Citizen Brigade, Founder and Co-Chair, 2022-Present
- Park University
  - Board of Trustees, 2019-Present

- Chair of the Executive Committee and Trusteeship Committee, 2023-Present
- Co-Chair of the Strategic Alliances Committee, 2019-2022

- The Latino Coalition
  - Governance Chair, 2023-Present
  - Board of Directors, 2021-2022
- Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, Executive Women's Leadership Council, 2018-2022, Advocacy and Community Subgroup Co-Chair
- LaunchCode, Kansas City STEM Alliance, Board of Advisors, 2021
- Lawyers Encouraging Academic Performance (LEAP), Elected Lifetime Member 2021, Board Member, 2008-Present; Vice President, 2015-Present; Secretary, 2013-2015
- CROWN, the Cross Organizational Women's Network in Kansas City, Steering Committee, 2019
- TEDxKCWomen, Advisory Council, 2019
- Camp Fire, National Board of Trustees, 2016; Governance Chair, 2016-2017; Secretary, 2016-2021
- Greater Missouri Leadership Challenge, 2010; Alumni and Kansas City Planning Committee, 2011-Present; Foundation Board of Directors, 2016-2020; Advisor, 2020-Present
- Platte County South Community Center YMCA, Board of Directors, 2016-2018
- Operation Breakthrough, Back to School Drive Co-Chair, 2012-2016
- 100+ Women Who Care, 2014-2019
- Harvest Ball Society, 2013-2020
- Heartland Women's Leadership Council (HWLC), Board Member, 2011-2014; Co-Governance Chair, 2014-2015
- Kansas City Tomorrow, 2005-2006; Alumni Board Member, 2006-2008; Alumni Member, 2008-Present
- Women's Foundation - 360 Degrees of Giving, Founding Board Member

Honors

- Selected among *The Best Lawyers in America*®, 2021-2024

- *Missouri Lawyers Weekly,* THE POWER LIST, Business Defense 2021-2023
- *Ingram's Magazine*, WeKC - Women Executives Kansas City, 2021
- *Chambers USA: America's Leading Lawyers for Business*, Missouri Litigation: General Commercial, 2021-2023
- *Kansas City Business Journal*, "Women Who Mean Business," 2020
- The Federation of Defense and Corporate Counsel, Vice Chair of Toxic Tort and Environmental Law Section, 2019-2020
- *Kansas City Business Journal*, "Best of the Bar," 2012-2015, 2018-2019
- *Ingram's Magazine*, "50 Missourians You Should Know," 2019
- Martindale-Hubbell® "AV" Rating
- *Missouri & Kansas Super Lawyers*, 2013-2023
  - "Top 50 Female Lawyers," 2014-2018
  - "Top 100 Lawyers," 2017
  - "Rising Stars," 2009
- *Ingram's Magazine,* "40 Under Forty," 2015
- LEAP - Mardi Gras Luncheon, "Queen," 2015; President's Award, 2013 and 2014
- *Missouri Lawyers Weekly's* Women's Justice Awards, "Rising Star," 2013
- *KC Business Magazine,* "Rising Star," 2013