



Bernard (Bernie) J. Rhodes

Partner

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A client once gave Bernie Rhodes a pair of socks that said, “Emergency Contact Person.” Bernie loved the socks, stating, “When a client is in trouble, I am the person they call. I have the skill set to respond to any situation and the confidence to make split-second decisions.” One assistant general counsel said, “When trying to think of one example of an expectation being exceeded, it is hard because so much has been done for us.”

Bernie Rhodes’ 40-year career at Lathrop GPM can be defined as high-profile, high-stakes and high-risk. A recipient of a Legal Champion Award presented by Missouri Lawyers Media, Bernie leads Lathrop GPM’s nationwide Media Law Practice Group. In that role, he faces challenges daily as part of the 24-hour news cycle. He has a dual focus, with half of his time spent in newsrooms advising media organizations—from traditional outlets to modern social media platforms—and the other half in the courtroom. This blend of advisory and litigation work equips Bernie with a unique perspective.

Due to his experience with the media, Bernie is frequently called on to aid the firm’s clients in high-profile matters and has appeared as counsel in more than 100 reported decisions.

He is also frequently called upon to conduct internal corporate investigations, given his thorough understanding of the legal landscape and the unique challenges faced by media exposure. His ability to navigate complex legal scenarios ensures that clients receive top-tier representation.

Clients who work with Bernie can expect a passionate advocate, a proven record of accomplishment, a seasoned trial lawyer and a dedication to upholding fundamental rights. He regularly handles:

- Appeals

Areas of Focus

Services

[Intellectual Property](#)

[Litigation](#)

[Class Action Defense](#)

[Non-Compete, Non-Solicit,](#)

[Trade Secrets & Other](#)

[Restrictive Covenants](#)

[Appellate](#)

[General Business & Complex](#)

[Commercial Litigation](#)

Sectors

[Content, Media &](#)

[Entertainment](#)

[Entertainment](#)

[Internet & Social Media](#)

[Media Pre-Issue Review](#)

- Civil Litigation
 - Commercial Litigation
 - Intellectual Property
 - Trademarks and Trade Secrets
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Experience

Representative Experience

Bernie is recognized for his courtroom prowess, comprehensive advisory work for media organizations and dedication to achieving top-tier legal outcomes.

Complex Commercial, Business and Appellate Litigation

- Won an appellate court victory on behalf of a property owner who sued the county for violating his due process rights and an award of attorney's fees.
- Won a favorable ruling on behalf of a New York Times best-selling author who was sued by his former agent following a two-week trial.
- Won a \$4.12 million jury verdict in a test case as part of a multi-party franchise dispute with a national tax preparation firm; eventually collected \$270 million on behalf of 16 clients.
- Successfully represented the owner of the professional football team against a claim by a former professional athlete who claimed an ownership interest in the team.
- Obtained a permanent injunction and substantial monetary judgment against the seller of "hacked" cable modems on behalf of a national cable company.
- Obtained favorable settlement of a class-action lawsuit against a Fortune 500 company over an allegedly defective computer product.
- Won summary judgment dismissing a bank's \$7.5 million claim against a cattle owner.
- Obtained Section 1983 civil rights judgment against a county, including an award of attorney fees.
- Successfully represented an international financier against a claim brought by a trading firm.
- Collected a \$4.5 million jury verdict for a national candy manufacturer for loss of customer goodwill and related damage to registered trademarks.
- Obtained a jury verdict on behalf of owners of a \$12 million business jet, allowing them to return the plane to the manufacturer due to electrical defects.

- Recovered \$1.7 million from a national health insurance company in an ERISA lawsuit brought on behalf of a local non-profit research corporation.
- Won a \$1.3 million arbitration award for a client in a breach of contract and fraud case resulting from a failed business acquisition.
- Obtained a \$1 million jury verdict on behalf of a national manufacturer against a customer for damages caused by a "bust-out" scheme.

Media

- Successfully represented a national advertiser and advertising agency against claims by a stock photo model who alleged the ad defamed them and put them in a false light.
- Obtained dismissal of a lawsuit alleging violation of the Antiterrorism Act against an Academy Award-winning documentary's director, producer, and distributor.
- Won a Missouri Supreme Court appeal dismissing a defamation and invasion of privacy lawsuit brought against a leading national animal advocacy group based on the group's public advocacy in support of the statewide public referendum.
- Obtained dismissal of civil rights lawsuit against local radio station owner based on the decision not to accept local political advertising and awarded sanctions against plaintiff and plaintiff's attorney.
- Obtained a quarter of a million-dollar settlement on behalf of a network television journalist in a federal civil rights lawsuit against a SWAT team who tear-gassed journalists.
- Production counsel for docuseries filmed in Kansas and broadcast on a popular reality cable television network.
- Received a summary judgment award dismissing a defamation and invasion of privacy lawsuit against a leading national sports publication over an article that referred to the plaintiff as "Vlad the Impaler."
- Won state sunshine lawsuit against state agency requiring the agency to provide historical birth and death records to non-profit genealogical agency, along with an award of \$150,00 in attorney's fees.
- Obtained dismissal of a lawsuit brought by a former reporter for the daily newspaper who alleged news reports of his dismissal were false and defamatory.
- Obtained sanctions order dismissing a defamation lawsuit brought by a suspended lawyer over publishing a news report in the daily newspaper.
- Obtained appellate court reversal of a \$1.1 million jury verdict against a network-affiliate TV station in a lawsuit brought by the subject of a police investigation into a serial killer.
- Won dismissal of a defamation case brought by a national plastic surgery chain against an out-of-state TV station over a multi-part series exposing questionable practices.
- Obtained dismissal of a defamation action brought by a suspended attorney as a sanction for discovery abuses.
- Coordinated the local media response to a law enforcement request for information concerning the nationwide search for a missing baby.

- Won a state sunshine lawsuit against a state university by a non-partisan, non-profit research organization.
- Successfully defended a local television station in a lawsuit resulting from an undercover “sting” operation conducted by the station.
- Won a defense jury verdict in a defamation action brought by a school principal against a local television station over a false broadcast.
- Obtained reversal of prior restraint order against local television station prohibiting broadcast of internet sex predator investigation.
- Won summary judgment for a national documentary producer in a defamation case brought by a local business owner over the broadcast of footage showing an anti-drug protest.
- Achieved dismissal of a false light action resulting from the broadcast of the wrong mug shot.
- Obtained a state supreme court ruling allowing media outlets to object to the closure of proceedings in a high-profile murder trial.
- Obtained summary judgment in a defamation/false light action by a dentist over a broadcast concerning the allegation that the dentist violated the state dental act.

Intellectual Property

- Successfully represented a national cable channel and independent production company against a copyright infringement claim over a video used in a reality show segment.
- Successfully defended a national tax preparation software company against false advertising and Lanham Act claims from a major national competitor.
- Successfully resisted a major college football conference effort to require a local TV station to change the name of its post-game sports program.
- Obtained dismissal of trademark dilution claim against movie production company based on the appearance of claimant’s product in a movie.
- Obtained an injunction against a political campaign using the name of a local hospital in “caller ID” for political campaign calls.
- Successfully prosecuted a copyright infringement claim on behalf of a national news program against a US Senate campaign based on improper use of news footage.
- Obtained dismissal of a trademark infringement claim against an infomercial production company based on the appearance of the claimant’s product in an infomercial.
- Obtained dismissal of a copyright infringement lawsuit brought against a national television network by two brothers who claimed the network stole the idea for a popular television drama series from their unpublished manuscript.
- Successfully defended a copyright infringement claim brought by an alleged copyright owner against the distributor of a national reality show.

- Successfully represented a major defense contractor in a jury trial against a trademark claim brought by a local competitor over the name of the client's gunpowder.

Corporate Investigations

- Conducted a wide-ranging internal corporate investigation on behalf of a major public corporation into alleged obstruction of justice; successfully handled a federal grand jury investigation into the matter.
- Successfully defended a Big Three automaker against a claim of "covering up" an alleged product defect in a lawsuit by two so-called "whistle-blowers."
- Investigated missing premium money on behalf of an insurance company and obtained a contempt violation against the former agent, resulting in his imprisonment.
- Led an internal investigation into the activities of a division manager of a national company, leading to his termination.
- Investigated on behalf of the US subsidiary of an international corporation into alleged kickbacks paid by an overseas contractor.

Credentials

Education

- Fordham University School of Law, J.D., 1981
- University of Missouri - Kansas City, B.A., 1978, with honors

Bar Admissions

- Kansas
- Missouri
- New York

Court Admissions

- U.S. Supreme Court
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit

- U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York
- U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri
- U.S. District Court for the Western District of Missouri
- U.S. District Court for the District of Kansas
- U.S. District Court for the Central District of Illinois
- U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois

Recognition

- *Ingram's: "50 Missourians You Should Know,"* 2024
 - Selected among *The Best Lawyers in America*®, 2003-2025
 - Litigation – First Amendment "Lawyer of the Year," 2020-2021
 - Kansas Coalition for Open Government, "Above and Beyond Awards," 2023
 - *Missouri Lawyers Media*, THE POWER LIST, Sports and Entertainment Law, 2023-2024
 - *Missouri Lawyers Media*, "Legal Champion Award," 2024
 - Political Activism/1st Amendment Rights Trailblazer, *The National Law Journal*, 2020
 - Selected as a *Lawyer of the Year*, by *The Best Lawyers in America*®, 2015-2018
 - Martindale-Hubbell® "AV" Rating
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Presentations

- Presenter, "'The First Amendment Under Siege,' True-Life Stories of Attacks on the First Amendment from Local Government & Businesses," Greater Kansas City Public Relations Society Association (PRSA), June 17, 2025
- Co-presenter, "Been There, Won That," Lathrop GPM 2024 State of Litigation, May 21, 2024
- Podcast Guest, "Up To Date," *Kansas City Public Radio (KCUR 89.3)*, March 25, 2024
- Panelist, "Sunshine Amid the Storms," The League of Women Voters of Kansas City/Jackson-Clay-Platte Counties, March 11, 2024
- Moderator, "Defamation 101: Back to the Basics," KCMBA Media and the Law Seminar, April 14, 2021
- Panelist, *Spotlight Corporate Ethics: Identifying and Understanding Blind Spots and What Can Be Done About Them*, UMKC School of Law, May 15, 2019

- Speaker, *The News Media's Role in Police Accountability, pre-and post-Ferguson*, "Access and Accountability: A Conference for Government Transparency Advocates, Yale Law School, October 2017.

Professional Activities

- American Bar Association, Tort Trial and Insurance Practice Section; Forum on Communications Law
- Kansas Bar Association
- Kansas City Metropolitan Bar Association, Media Law Committee
- Media Law Resource Center, New Developments Committee
- The Missouri Bar, Media Law Committee