



William Beck

Partner

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Bill Beck has more than 35 years of experience as a trial lawyer. Bill's national practice consists of trials, arbitrations, administrative proceedings, mediations and negotiations to resolve high stakes, technical, complex disputes involving environmental liability and insurance coverage.

Toxic Tort. Bill is particularly experienced in defending major toxic tort litigation, including both mass actions and class actions. His key wins include summary judgments and voluntary dismissals of a large group of high-profile, Erin Brockovich-created, hexavalent chromium exposure class actions, mass actions and individual suits; defense verdicts in a five-week groundwater jury trial and a complex odor trial; the nominal mass settlement of a 2,000-plaintiff groundwater and air case; and defeating class certification on pleadings alone. He reached and implemented some of the most challenging and controversial class settlements in recent times. Bill is presently defending numerous complex putative class actions, mass actions and individual toxic tort and odor nuisance cases in New York, South Carolina, Alabama, Illinois, Kansas and Missouri. Bill is comfortable and experienced cross-examining and developing experts in technical fields such as epidemiology, risk assessment, molecular biology and carcinogenesis, air dispersion modeling, groundwater modeling, geotechnical engineering and analytical chemistry.

Insurance Coverage. Bill has been lead counsel for plaintiffs prosecuting environmental insurance coverage and bad faith lawsuits and claims involving more than 450 sites and the laws of more than 40 states. Bill's insurance coverage team has experience in insurance archaeology, policy analysis, charting, allocation, claim development, settlement negotiations, coverage litigation, and alternative coverage dispute resolution. Bill has recovered hundreds of millions of dollars from insurers.

PFAS. Bill has been lead trial counsel defending multi-thousand-plaintiff mass tort litigation seeking medical monitoring and alleging widespread property damage; class litigation seeking remedial action at several different kinds of manufacturing and waste receiving facilities, as well as money damages; a Riverkeeper's citizen's suit

Areas of Focus

Services

[Contaminants & Toxic Torts](#)

[Environmental Law](#)

[Insurance Recovery & Counseling](#)

[Odor Nuisance](#)

[Class Action Defense](#)

[PFAS \(per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances\)](#)

[Environmental Insurance Analysis & Recovery](#)

[Environmental Litigation](#)

[Environmental Regulatory Compliance](#)

[Superfund \(CERCLA\) & Site Remediation](#)

[Civil Rights Insurance Recovery](#)

[General Business & Complex Commercial Litigation](#)

Sectors

[Agribusiness & Food](#)

seeking to prevent PFAS use, receipt and discharge to surface water; and claims of property damage and increased disease risk by one the owners of one manufacturing facility against another. Bill and his team regularly counsel clients on PFAS regulatory compliance, remediation, reporting and litigation avoidance in numerous states with fast-evolving regulatory programs requiring creative and thoughtful compliance approaches to avoid loss.

Superfund. Bill has defended companies against major environmental liabilities for decades, including more than 80 federal and state Superfund sites in more than 25 states. Bill has special proficiency in operator allocation, transporter liability and allocation, municipal solid waste liability and allocation, successor liability, orphan share and natural resource damages issues.

Civil Rights. Bill helps lead a team representing people who have served decades of prison time for crimes they did not commit, seeking compensation for their civil rights claims, including successful lawsuits for exonerees in Mississippi and Kansas and pending lawsuits for wrongfully convicted people in Louisiana and Illinois. Working with leading national civil rights firms and organizations since the 1990s, Bill and the team also help obtain multi-million-dollar recoveries for dozens of exonerees by reaching law enforcement liability insurance and other coverage, and in the process establishing cutting edge trigger of coverage theories as the law of several states.

Credentials

Education

- University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law, J.D.
- University of Missouri - Kansas City, B.A.

Bar Admissions

- Missouri

Court Admissions

- U.S. Supreme Court
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth 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 Northern District of Illinois
- U.S. District Court for the District of Colorado
- U.S. District Court for the Western District of Oklahoma
- U.S. District Court for the Western District of Missouri
- U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri
- U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan
- U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Wisconsin
- U.S. District Court for the District of Kansas

Recognition

- Selected among *The Best Lawyers in America*®, 2005-2025
 - Litigation – Environmental, “Lawyer of the Year,” 2015, 2018, 2024
 - Environmental Law, “Lawyer of the Year,” 2020-2021
 - Insurance Law, “Lawyer of the Year,” 2012
- *Chambers USA*, Missouri Environmental, Missouri Insurance, 2004-2024
- *Missouri Lawyers Media*, ICON Honoree, 2023
 - Top Legal Innovations Award, Emerging Practice Areas, PFAS
- *Missouri Lawyer Weekly*, “The POWER List – Commercial & Consumer Law,” 2020-2024
- Named an “Influential Appellate Advocate” for one of the most significant appellate decisions of the year, *Missouri Lawyers Media*, 2020
- *National Law Journal*, “Litigation Trailblazer,” 2019
 - “Top 50 Energy & Environmental Trailblazers,” 2015
- Selected as one of *Lawdragon’s* “500 Leading Lawyers in the United States,” 2007-2009, 2017-2018
- Elected as Fellow of the American College of Coverage Counsel (ACCC), 2014
- *Missouri & Kansas Super Lawyers*, 2005-2024
 - “Top 100 in Missouri,” and “Top 50 in Kansas City,”
- Biography included in *Who’s Who in American Law*®

- Martindale-Hubbell® Peer Review Rating – AV Preeminent
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Presentations

- Speaker, “Preserving the Issue: From There to Here, from Here to There, Toxic Tire Rubber Is Everywhere,” American Bar Association’s 32nd Annual Section of Environment, Energy & Resources (SEER) Fall Conference, October 25, 2024
 - Co-presenter, “Your (Forgotten Legacy) Insurance is the Best Alternative Fee Arrangement,” Lathrop GPM 2024 State of Litigation, May 21, 2024
 - Co-presenter, “Wrongful Conviction Liability Coverage in the 2020s,” American College of Coverage Counsel 12th Annual Meeting, May 9, 2024
 - Co-presenter, “A Primer on Civil Rights Insurance Coverage,” North Carolina Advocates for Justice (NCAJ), November 14, 2023
 - Co-presenter, “The PFAS and the Furious: Insurance Coverage for ‘Forever Chemical’ Suits and Other Property and Casualty Claims,” American College of Coverage Counsel (ACCC) 2023 Annual Meeting, May 11, 2023
 - Panelist, “PFAS – A Huge Liability Come Home to Roost,” American Agricultural Law Association Educational Symposium, November 11, 2022
 - Panelist, “Buckle Up: The PFAS Rollercoaster—Across All Environmental Media—Is About to Leave the Station,” American Bar Association Section of Environment, Energy & Resources (SEER) Conference, September 22, 2022
 - Presenter, “The Growing Trigger Dispute for Civil Rights Claims,” American Bar Association Insurance Coverage Litigation Committee CLE Seminar, February 27, 2019
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Publications

- Co-author, “The PFAS and the Furious: Evaluating EPA’s New PFAS Lifetime Health Advisories and Implications for the Future of PFAS Litigation,” American Bar Association Section of Environment, Energy & Resources (SEER), September 2022
 - Co-author, “Law Enforcement Liability Insurance,” New Appleman on Insurance Law Library Ed. §33, 2011
 - Co-author, “Environmental Insurance,” New Appleman Insurance Law Practice Guide, 2nd ed. Matthew Bender & Company, Inc., 2008
 - Co-author, “Understanding Environmental Insurance,” Appleman on Insurance Law and Practice, 2nd ed. Matthew Bender & Company, Inc., 2008
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Professional Activities

- American Bar Association and its Litigation, Insurance and Environmental Sections

- Defense Research Institute and its Trial Techniques Committee
- Missouri Bar Association
- Kansas City Metropolitan Bar Association
- American College of Coverage Counsel

Community Involvement

- Kansas City Public Improvements, Advisory Committee, Past Chair
- Citizens Association of Kansas City, Past Chair
- Kansas City Community Infrastructure Committee, Past Finance Chair
- Midwest Innocence Project, Advisory Board, past member