

# J. Calhoun Watson

GENERAL COUNSEL

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**CAL IS A LITIGATOR WITH EXTENSIVE EXPERIENCE IN COMPLEX BUSINESS, INSURANCE, AND FINANCIAL DISPUTES, CLASS ACTIONS, AND PROFESSIONAL LIABILITY AND ETHICS.**

During his 39 years of practice, Cal has represented individuals, local and national businesses, partnerships, manufacturers, insurance companies, and financial institutions.

## AREAS OF FOCUS

- Business Litigation
- Legal Liability and Ethics
- Litigation

## REPRESENTATIVE MATTERS

- Represented lawyers, law firms, and legal professionals in legal malpractice suits arising from real estate, probate, business, family law, litigation, and corporate matters.
- Represented lawyers before the Office of Disciplinary Counsel for a wide variety of alleged violations of South Carolina Rules of Professional Conduct.
- Represented a variety of defendants in PFAS litigations.
- Represented a variety of defendants in multiple trade secret litigations.
- Represented officers and directors of failed companies in claims of breach of fiduciary duty, negligence, and self-dealing.
- Represented numerous defendants in wide variety of claims alleging violations of the South Carolina Unfair Trade Practices Act, conspiracy, fraud, defamation, and breach of contract accompanied by fraudulent act.
- Represented numerous defendants, including insurance administrators and financial services companies, in class actions in a variety of insurance, financial, manufacturing, and statutory issues.
- Represented business owners in variety of litigated disputes with other owners or shareholders.
- Represented real estate agents, brokers, and appraisers in disputes involving the sale of real estate.
- Represented multiple manufacturers in a variety of construction and warranty disputes.
- Represented companies and individuals in federal RICO claims.
- Pursued and defended breach of contract claims in wide variety of pre-litigation and litigated contexts.
- Represented franchisees in claims of negligence and negligent supervision.
- Pursued and defended indemnity claims in a variety of litigated contexts.

## RANKINGS AND RECOGNITION

- Chambers U.S.A. America's Leading Lawyers for Business (2009-2025)
- South Carolina Lawyer's Weekly "Go To Lawyer" for Business Law in South Carolina (2021)
- South Carolina Lawyer's Weekly Leadership in Law Awards Lawyer of the Year (2015)
- *Columbia Business Monthly* Legal Elite of the Midlands
  - Professional Liability (2023)
  - Business Litigation (2025)
- Best Lawyers in America
  - Bet-the-Company Litigation (2010-2026)
    - Lawyer of the Year (2016, 2022, 2024)
  - Commercial Litigation (2008-2026)
  - Professional Malpractice Law, Defendants (2008-2026)
    - Lawyer of the Year (2026)
- John Belton O'Neall Inn of Court Rhodes McDonald Award (2026)



- South Carolina Super Lawyers
  - Professional Liability Defense (2010-2012)
  - Business Litigation (2008-2020, 2023-2026)
- *South Carolina Lawyers Weekly* Excellence in Law
  - Icon Award (2024)
- Senior Fellow, Litigation Counsel of America (2014-present)
- Litigation Special Report Top Rated Lawyer in Commercial Litigation
- Historic Columbia Innovative Leadership Award
- USC Law School Alumni Association Compleat Lawyer Award Silver Medallion

## **PUBLICATIONS AND SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS**

- Presenter, “Conflict of Interest? Spotting Conflicts Before They Spot You,” Attorney Protective Webinar (March 11, 2026)
- Panelist, “Bridging Generational Divides- AI and Beyond,” South Carolina Bar Convention (January 23, 2026)
- Panelist, “U.S. Spotlight: Insights into the New Legal Landscape” Meritas Annual General Meeting (April 10, 2025)
- Panelist, “Ethics and Generative AI,” South Carolina Bar CLE (March 28, 2025)
- Speaker, “Conflict Zone: Strategies for Ethically Avoiding Conflicts of Interest” (March 19, 2025)
- Speaker, “Feeling Conflicted?: The Ethics of Conflicts of Interest” (June 12, 2024)
- Presenter, “Current Ethics Challenges and Best Practices Featuring Law Firm Managing Partners and General Counsel,” IADC Midyear Meeting (February 2024)
- Presenter, “Navigating Protection of Attorney-Client and Work Product Privileges in Uncertain Times,” IADC Annual Meeting (July 11, 2023)
- Speaker, “Fail to Plan, Plan to Fail: Addressing Conflicts of Interest Before They Arise” (June 14, 2023)
- Panelist, “Managing Emerging Malpractice Risk in the Future Firm” IADC Annual Meeting (July 10, 2022)
- Presenter, “Better Safe than Sorry! Tips to Prevent Conflict of Interest Violations” (May 18, 2022)
- Presenter, “Calibrating Your Ethical Compass: Navigating Conflicts of Interest” (April 21, 2021)
- Panelist, “Scaling the Summit: Fiscal Strategy & Business Growth at Midsize Firms,” virtual roundtable of the Annual Law Firm COO & CFO Forum by Thompson Reuters’ Legal Executive Institute (October 30, 2020)
- Presenter, “10 Hot Topics on Conflicts of Interest” (April 22, 2020)
- Panelist, “You Are What You Think So What’s On Your Mind? Tackling Implicit Bias Through Self Assessment,” South Carolina Bar Convention (January 25, 2020)
- Panelist, “Implicit Bias,” SC Judicial Conference’s Staff Attorney and Law Clerk Seminar (September 2019)
- Presenter, “10 Hot Topics in Conflicts of Interest” (April 10, 2019)
- Presenter, “Legal Ethics: 10 Hot Topics in Conflicts of Interest and Best Practice Tips” (July 25, 2018)
- Presenter, “Professional Liability in the Age of Social Media,” Meritas Litigation/Labor & Employment Group Meeting (October 17, 2017)



- Panelist, “Law Firm of the Future,” Meritas Annual Meeting (April 21, 2017)
- Co-Author, [The Law of Legal Malpractice in South Carolina](#), First and Second Editions, South Carolina Bar CLE Division
- Presenter, “Spotlight on Conflicts of Interest” (May 18, 2017)
- Presenter, “Spotlight on Conflicts of Interest” (August 11, 2015)

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- Judicial Clerk, The Honorable Robert F. Chapman, Judge, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit

## PROFESSIONAL AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

### Professional

- American Bar Association
- Richland County Bar Association
- Meritas
  - Board of Directors (2024-2027)
  - U.S. Leadership Committee (2022- present)
  - Member Engagement Committee (2021-present)
- South Carolina Bar
  - President (2014-2015)
  - Board of Governors (1998-2000, 2009-2016)
  - House of Delegates (1997-present)
  - Conventions Committee (2003-2008)
  - Nominating Committee (2001-2004)
  - Long Range Planning Committee (2000-2001)
  - President, Young Lawyers Division (1997-1998)
  - Member, Long Range Planning Committee, Young Lawyers Division (1995-1996)
- South Carolina Bar Foundation
  - President (2006-2007)
  - Member, Board of Directors (2000-2008)
- International Association of Defense Counsel
  - Chair, In House and Law Firm Management Committee (2021-2023)
  - Chair, Professional Liability Roundtable (2018-2019)
  - Chair, Professional Liability Committee (2016-2018)
  - Chair, Technology Committee (2010-2012)
  - Chair, Website Task Force



- National Conference of Bar Presidents (2014-present)
  - Member, Communications Committee (2014)
- John Belton O’Neill Inn of Court
  - President (2010-2011)
- Fellow, American Bar Foundation (2014-present)
- Litigation Counsel of America
  - Barrister, Order of Centurions
  - Advocate, Order of Certus
  - Member, Trial Law Institute
  - Member, Diversity Law Institute
- South Carolina Defense Trial Attorneys’ Association (1996-present)
- Defense Research Institute (1996-present)
- Southern Conference of Bar Presidents (2014-present)
- Claims & Litigation Management Alliance
- Access to Justice Commission (2006-2012)
- South Carolina Lawyer Magazine
  - Member, Editorial Board (2000-2007)
- Supreme Court of South Carolina Certified Mediator

**Community**

- Historic Columbia Foundation
  - President (2007-2009)
  - Historic Columbia Advisory Council (2009-Present)
- Wofford College National Alumni Association
  - President (2000)

**CREDENTIALS**

**Bar Admissions**

- South Carolina Bar

**Court Admissions**

- All South Carolina courts
- U.S. District Court for the District of South Carolina
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit

## Education

- University of South Carolina School of Law, J.D., *cum laude* (1987)
  - Order of the Coif
  - Student Works Editor of the South Carolina Law Review
  - Legal Writing Instructor (1986-1987)
- Wofford College, B.A., *summa cum laude* (1984)
  - Phi Beta Kappa

## RELATED INDUSTRIES

- [Banking and Financial Services](#)
- [Corporate and Business](#)
- [Food and Beverage](#)
- [Healthcare and Professional Services](#)
- [Lawyers and the Legal Profession](#)
- [Mediation and Arbitration](#)