

## Chris Hanslik Firm Chairman

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With over two decades of experience as a litigator, Chris Hanslik's practice has spanned the full spectrum of commercial and business litigation, including contracts, business torts, securities and corporate governance, oil and gas, lender liability, trade secrets, non-compete agreements and other employment-related disputes.

Recognizing that the last place most business clients want to be is in the courtroom, Chris strives to develop creative, practical, and value-driven solutions to complex problems and disputes from the outset. However, as a trial lawyer, he provides the skills necessary for success in the courtroom. Chris's courtroom experience ranges from state and federal court trials to arguments before the Supreme Court of Texas and all points in between. In the relentless pursuit of his client's best interest, Chris keeps one important value in mind — integrity.

From time to time, Chris contributes articles to Texas Lawyer, Law 360 and The Houston Business Journal. He has served as an adjunct professor at South Texas College of Law Houston teaching advocacy. He has also lectured to in-house legal departments regarding aspects of the attorney/client privilege and other ethical considerations as well as Internet privacy policies and eDiscovery.

### EDUCATION

- JD, South Texas College of Law Houston
- Order of the Barristers
- Dean's Outstanding Advocate Award
- BBA, Southern Methodist University



### AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS

- Chambers USA – Litigation: General Commercial (Texas) (2015-present)
- U.S. News & World Report – Best Lawyers® – Commercial Litigation (2016-present)
- Martindale-Hubbell Rating: AV® Preeminent™ Peer Review Rating
- Top 100: Houston Super Lawyers List (2015-present)
- Texas Super Lawyers (2005-present)
- Texas Super Lawyers Rising Star (2004-2005)
- H Texas Magazine Top Lawyer (2006-2007)
- H Texas Magazine Best Up-and-Coming Houston Lawyer (2004)

### AFFILIATIONS

- Houston Bar Association
- Texas Bar Foundation, Fellow
- State Bar of Texas Litigation Section
- State Bar of Texas, Administration of Rules of Evidence Committee



## AFFILIATIONS, CONT'D

- American Bar Association
- United States Supreme Court
- United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit
- Texas Association of Defense Counsel, Board of Directors (2014-2016)
- The Entrepreneurship Institute, Board of Directors, Houston Chapter (2007-2012)
- Smart Litigator Texas Board (2011-2012)
- Greater Houston Partnership, Business Leadership Council (2010)
- Greater Houston Partnership, Professional Services Council (2009)
- Greater Houston Partnership, Federal Relations Committee (1999-2001)

## COMMUNITY

- Houston Super Bowl LI Host Sub-Committee
- The Texas Bowl, Board of Directors (2012-present), Chairman (2014-2015)
- South Texas College of Law Houston, Board of Directors (2017-present)
- South Texas College of Law Houston, Alumni Board of Directors (2012-2015)
- SEARCH Homeless Services, Board of Directors (2015-present), Chairman (2018-present)
- SEARCH Homeless Services, Annual Luncheon Chair (2013)
- SEARCH Homeless Services, Friends of Picnic in the Park Host Committee (2010-present)
- Center for Houston's Future, Business/Civic Leadership Class (2011)
- Taste of the Texans, Steering Committee (2011-present)
- Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, Life Member, Speakers Committee: Committeeman (1997-2014), Vice Chairman (2006-2009), Team Captain (2003-2006), Business Speech Captain (2000-2003)
- SMU Alumni Association, Board of Directors (2005-2007)

## RELEVANT REPRESENTATIVE MATTERS

### BUSINESS LITIGATION

- Obtained judgment of more than \$9 million on behalf of entrepreneurs related to the sale of their valve company to a New York-based private equity firm. After the sale, the buyer asserted indemnification claims against the entrepreneurs based on pre-sale representations allegedly made by the entrepreneurs. In doing so, the buyer sought to avoid paying the bulk of the purchase price for the entrepreneurs' company. On competing summary judgment motions, the New York Supreme Court – Commercial Division rejected the buyer's claims (including claims for fraud, breach of contract, indemnification, and set-off) and granted the entrepreneurs' affirmative claims for breach of the various promissory notes at issue. The New York Court also awarded attorney's fees to the entrepreneurs.
- Won a unanimous jury verdict for one of Houston's oldest title insurance agencies in a dispute with its landlord for breaching an exclusive use clause in the client's lease. After a week in trial, the jury awarded the client a judgment for its damages, including attorney's fees.
- Won a unanimous jury verdict for a homeowner against a designer hired to provide interior design services. Although the client paid the designer for several decorative pieces, the designer failed to purchase the items and then refused to return our client's money. The designer filed a counter-claim for the amount of money he alleged was still owed under the terms of the parties' agreement. The jury rendered a verdict in favor of our client finding that the designer breached their agreement.
- Won a jury verdict for an independent oil and gas exploration company for damages to one of its production platforms in the Gulf of Mexico. After a week-long trial, the jury awarded damages that were caused by another oil company's crew boat running into the platform.

**BUSINESS LITIGATION, CONT'D**

- Won a unanimous decision from the Texas Supreme Court on behalf of a major water bottling company in a dispute against land owners concerning the alleged drainage of an aquifer. The trial court granted a summary judgment at the lower court level, rejecting plaintiff's attempt to obtain an injunction to halt the production of spring water from client's largest water source.
- Won a unanimous jury verdict for an owner of a hotel against a large group customer who canceled a series of contracts claiming the hotel's service has diminished. The customer preemptively sued the client. Counterclaims were filed on behalf of the client and, at trial, the customer's claims were dismissed via directed verdict. The jury rendered a verdict in favor of the client finding that the customer breached the contracts.
- Won a summary judgment for a popular local restaurant in a lawsuit filed by a competing restaurant in the same shopping center. The plaintiff sued the client in an effort to shut down their operations claiming certain lease covenants were being violated. The competing restaurant alleged it was a third-party beneficiary to the client's lease with the center's landlord. After briefing the issues to the trial court a summary judgment was granted dismissing all of plaintiff's claims within four months from the date the lawsuit was filed.
- Won a multi-million dollar arbitration award on behalf of the owners of a software company against an oil-field services company who purchased their company. The claims and recovery related to misrepresentations made during negotiations and execution of a stock purchase agreement. After 15 days of evidence, the three-member panel ruled unanimously in favor of our client.
- Won a unanimous jury verdict of \$1.3 million on behalf of two former partners of an accounting firm based on the accounting firm's failure to pay amounts owed to the partners following their separation from the firm, including amounts owed to them for the repurchase of their shares of stock in the accounting firm. The jury also unanimously rejected a counterclaim filed by the accounting firm in which the firm sought more than \$750,000 in damages based on alleged breaches of non-compete provisions, confidentiality provisions, and buy-sell provisions of the partners' employment agreements which would have required the former partners to pay the firm for any clients that left with the former partners.
- Won an arbitration award on behalf of a custom home builder against its customer for breaching the construction contract and wrongfully withholding draw payments. After a week-long arbitration hearing, the client was awarded its past due draws, attorney's fees and arbitration costs.
- Won a bench trial for a manufacturing company against a national accountant placement agency. The client sued when it discovered that the controller it hired from the agency had a criminal record relating to theft by hot check. The agency refused to refund the placement fee. The verdict included a violation of the Texas Deceptive Trade Practices Act resulting in the client receiving a doubling of its damages and the recovery of attorney's fees.
- Won an appeals court decision upholding a summary judgment awarded in favor of a client relating to a breach of a settlement agreement. The opposing party claimed that provisions of the settlement agreement were unenforceable because they violated the Texas usury laws. The trial court granted summary judgment finding the usury laws were not implicated and awarded attorney's fees to the client. The trial court's ruling was upheld on appeal.
- Won an appeals court decision upholding a summary judgment awarded in favor of a business client. The underlying claims related to whether the client had properly exercised the renewal option in its commercial lease. The trial court granted summary judgment finding the renewal was properly exercised and awarded attorney's fees to the client. The trial court's ruling was upheld on appeal.
- Obtained a restraining order and temporary injunction to remove a company officer who was stealing from the company. The representation included counseling a group of minority shareholders who obtained sufficient written consents to restructure the board of directors and then elect new officers to remove the CEO who had the company's intellectual property assigned to himself. After the temporary injunction was granted an agreement was reached that returned the intellectual property to the company.
- Obtained a restraining order and, ultimately, a permanent injunction for copyright and trade dress infringement on behalf of the largest manufacturer of digital game feeder timers. Case brought against client's former customer who was improperly selling an identical product at an industry trade show.

**BUSINESS LITIGATION, CONT'D**

- Successfully defended a hospital system in a qui tam action alleging Medicare and Medicaid fraud under FCA. Representation included working with DOJ who declined to intervene and then successfully defending the underlying lawsuit against the qui tam Relator.
- Won a summary judgment on behalf of an independent geologist in a case brought by a working interest owner concerning acquisition and development of oil and gas leases. Claims included breach of contract, tortious interference with contractual relations and conspiracy. Plaintiff failed to consent to additional acreage under the Joint Operating Agreement and sued fellow working interest owners for almost \$10 million in damages.
- Won a summary judgment on behalf of an oil-field services company who was sued for allegedly misappropriating trade secrets from a competitor. When the client hired away the opposing side's salesman it sued. Summary judgment was awarded when it was shown that the opposing side did not have a valid trade secret as a matter of law.
- Won a summary judgment confirming a client's rights to certain intellectual property under a license agreement that was deemed to be exclusive, perpetual and irrevocable. The other side claimed that the license agreement expired after a certain term, but information obtained during discovery disproved that theory.
- Won a summary judgment that certain individuals lacked standing to sue a broker-dealer for investments made by entities owned and/or controlled by those individuals. The individuals claimed that they had a beneficial interest in the entities, but the court held that only the entities who purchased the securities could sue.
- Represented safety and compliance consulting company in high-exposure automobile death case filed by estate of decedent against multiple involved parties. Obtained dismissal of client from lawsuit without payment of any damages.
- Represented a manufacturer of frac and mud pumps utilized in the oilfield in breach of contract and fraudulent inducement action against company providing engineering and design support of equipment. Obtained a favorable settlement on behalf of client.
- Successfully negotiated resolution of complex, multi-million dollar dispute involving production of steel rig kits for use in offshore jack-up drilling rig application as between overseas steel mill, Houston-based steel fabricator, and offshore drilling systems provider in Mississippi.
- Pursued claims on behalf of a Houston area restaurant and wine bar for breach of a contract related to an event held at their facility.
- Pursuing claims on behalf of an Oklahoma-based company that sells and rents frac water transfer equipment. Two former employees solicited the company's customers and used their resources to start a competing business while still employed by the company.
- Defended an LTE cellular network provider in a lawsuit by a California-based wireless broadband network component provider in an action for breach of a contract to purchase component parts necessary to build an LTE network in West Texas.
- Successfully defended a Texas-based drilling rig manufacturer in a lawsuit by a drilling rig purchaser. The purchaser claimed the manufacturer breached a rig construction contract and tortiously interfered with its contract with a drilling operator. The purchaser sought approximately \$25 million for the cost of repairing the rig and lost profits. The case settled for a fraction of that amount on the eve of picking a jury.
- Represented a client before the Department of Justice in its investigation of alleged violations of the False Claims Act.
- Represented a 50% shareholder of a closely held corporation in a lawsuit against his business partner who wrongfully dismissed him as an officer and director of the company. An injunction was obtained on behalf of the client to maintain his status as an officer and director. Limited discovery revealed that the business partner had misappropriated funds from the company. Ultimately, the case was resolved by the client selling his shares of the company to the business partner at a hefty premium.
- Represented a major oil and gas company in a breach of joint venture claim. The joint venture related to a fractionation facility and the joint venture partner's failure to properly allocate funds. Two days after the opposing side answered the lawsuit filed on behalf of the client a settlement was reached which gave the client 100% of the relief requested in the petition.

**BUSINESS LITIGATION, CONT'D**

- Represented a closely held corporation against a minority shareholder and officer who misappropriated funds from the company. After the minority shareholder was removed as an officer he sued the company. The company defended those claims and filed counter-claims to recover the missing funds. Ultimately, the minority shareholder non-suited his claims and agreed to repay the company.
- Represented a former Enron executive in a preference action brought by the bankruptcy trustee. The trustee brought suit to recover a severance payment received just prior to the bankruptcy filing. The client also had claims against Enron and a non-bankrupt subsidiary. After discovery and substantive briefing before the Enron bankruptcy judge, a settlement was reached with the client agreeing to pay less than 18% of the amount the trustee was originally seeking to recover.
- Represented a 50% shareholder of a closely held corporation in a lawsuit against his business partner who was stealing money from the company. An injunction was obtained on behalf of the client removing the business partner as an officer of the company. The case included pre-litigation investigation of both a civil and criminal nature and then developing a strategy to remove the person through a temporary restraining order and injunction. These actions led to a favorable settlement within 30 days after filing the injunction.
- Settled a fraud and RICO dispute on behalf of a small gas marketing company in a case brought by the majority owner of a gas trading company. Plaintiff originally sought in excess of \$70 million in damages, alleging fraudulent gas trading and financial derivative transactions, but settled on very favorable terms for client prior to trial.
- Successfully defended a major oil and gas company against claims of tortious interference with prospective contractual relations in a case concerning a potential merger transaction. Plaintiff sought damages of approximately \$65 million plus exemplary damages. However, after a week of trial plaintiffs settled for less than 5% of that amount with the client not responsible for paying any of the settlement amount.
- Successfully defended a benefits plan administrator against ERISA claims brought by a plaintiff seeking to recover benefits under group life insurance policy. Certain claims against the client were dismissed through a Rule 12(b)(6) motion and the remaining claims were dismissed via summary judgment.
- Successfully defended a former officer and director against claims of fraud, breach of fiduciary duties and denuding corporate assets. Claims were brought by Bankruptcy Trustee on behalf of creditors of the corporation. After extensive discovery and certain claims being dismissed via summary judgment, the case settled within the limits of the applicable D&O policy.
- Representing the owner of two retail stores in a dispute with an international textile distributor. The textile distributor has claimed a partnership interest in the retail stores and has sued for damages for alleged breach of contract and various business-related torts.

**EMPLOYMENT LITIGATION**

- Successfully settled a theft of trade secrets case in which a former employee downloaded the entire contents of his former employer's cloud-based information system to several different electronic devices just prior to giving notice of his resignation. In this dispute, former employee left a geosynthetic lining company to work for a competitor performing a substantially similar role in the same geographic region. Obtained a temporary restraining order and temporary injunction enjoining the former employee from using any of his former employer's confidential information while working at the competitor. Through the pendency of the suit, conducted an electronic forensic review of the former employee's electronic devices and cloud-based storage systems discovering evidence of spoliation. After a spoliation motion was filed, the matter was successfully resolved.
- Defended two Montgomery-area physicians against claims by their former employer. The former employer, a Conroe-area hospital, alleged the physicians breached a noncompetition and nonsolicitation agreement when they left to open their own practice. Successfully defended the physicians against the former employer's efforts to obtain an injunction. The case settled soon after the court denied the former employer's request for an injunction.
- Defended two Conroe-area physicians against claims by their former employer. The former employer, a Conroe-area hospital, alleged the physicians breached a noncompetition and nonsolicitation agreement when they started their own family practice. The hospital also claimed the physicians breached fiduciary duties of loyalty by unfairly competing with the hospital. The trial court denied the hospital's request for a temporary injunction, allowing the physicians to continue serving their patients and the Conroe area. The case settled soon after the denial of the temporary injunction.



## EMPLOYMENT LITIGATION, CONT'D

- Obtained a temporary restraining order enjoining two former employees from doing business under a substantially similar business name as that of their former employer as well as from using their former employer's confidential information. Two defecting, former employees formed a competing company selling power-generation equipment to both commercial and industrial clients. Prior to filing suit, conducted an electronic, forensic review of the former employees' computers, and discovered evidence of theft of confidential information. This evidence was subsequently used at the emergency hearing. The case was successfully settled within a month of obtaining the emergency relief.
- Successfully represented a Fortune 200 client in an arbitration hearing that upheld the termination of an employee with a disability who claimed he was the victim of discrimination. The employee, who suffers from attention deficit-hyperactive disorder (ADHD), filed a lawsuit under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) claiming his disability prevented him from meeting performance goals set by the company and he should receive a reasonable accommodation to be exempt from the performance standard. The company and employee engaged in an interactive process and the employee was allowed to request his own accommodation. The employee requested additional one-on-one training, which was provided and he was given an opportunity to improve. He was not terminated until his performance declined. The arbitrator determined that the termination was valid and not discriminatory.
- Won a unanimous jury verdict of \$1.3 million on behalf of two former partners of an accounting firm based on the accounting firm's failure to pay amounts owed to the partners following their separation from the firm, including amounts owed to them for the repurchase of their shares of stock in the accounting firm. The jury also unanimously rejected a counterclaim filed by the accounting firm in which the firm sought more than \$750,000 in damages based on alleged breaches of non-compete provisions, confidentiality provisions, and buy-sell provisions of the partners' employment agreements which would have required the former partners to pay the firm for any clients that left with the former partners.
- Obtained a restraining order and temporary injunction against a company attempting to compete in violation of a non-competition agreement signed in a purchase agreement. The client had purchased the business from the opposing side and included a non-competition agreement. The opposing side then tried to set up a competing company using other individual's names in the competing company's organizational documents. After the temporary injunction was granted, a settlement was reached which removed the competitor from the market.
- Successfully defended a client with over 4,000 employees in more than 15 different discrimination lawsuits including, but not limited to, claims of age, race, religion, and disability discrimination.
- Successfully defended a national manufacturer-distributor in an EEOC proceeding brought by former employee claiming sexual harassment and gender discrimination relating to a manager's sex based comments. The matter settled on very favorable terms for the employer after an extensive EEOC investigation that included multiple on-site interviews of employees and review of company records.
- Represented a restaurant and bar in defense of a claim under the Fair Labor Standards Act. The plaintiffs were former waitresses and bartenders claiming tip pool violations. The case was settled on favorable terms to the client after minimal discovery.
- Represented a title company in defense of a claim under the Fair Labor Standards Act. The plaintiffs were assistant escrow officers claiming unpaid overtime. The case was settled on favorable terms to the client after minimal discovery and briefing on key legal issues.
- Defended two Montgomery-area physicians against claims by their former employer. The former employer, a Conroe-area hospital, alleged the physicians breached a noncompetition and nonsolicitation agreement when they left to work for another hospital. Successfully obtained a summary judgment that the physician noncompetition agreements were not enforceable because they did not contain a clause related to the continuing care of patients with acute illnesses. The case settled soon after the court granted the physicians' motion for summary judgment.
- Pursuing claims on behalf of an Oklahoma-based company that sells and rents frac water transfer equipment. Two former employees solicited the company's customers and used their resources to start a competing business while still employed by the company.

**EMPLOYMENT LITIGATION, CONT'D**

- Successfully defended a manufacturer in a lawsuit brought by former employee claiming sexual harassment, hostile work environment and negligent hiring based on allegations that former employee's supervisor made sexually explicit comments to her. The former employee's claim of negligent hiring was premised on the allegation that the employer hired the supervisor who had a criminal record. The lawsuit raised novel issues relating to the exclusivity provision of the Texas Workers Compensation Act.

**REAL ESTATE LITIGATION**

- Successfully represented mixed-use real estate developer in claims for breach of contract, breach of warranty and construction defect against its former general contractor involving substantial water infiltration in two luxury apartment buildings.
- Representing Houston-based real estate developer in Texas state court action involving claims for breach of contract and declaratory judgment related to a retail anchor-tenant's breach of its lease and the resulting delay in funding and construction of a sizeable mixed-use commercial retail development.
- Represented a California-based construction and retail real estate development, re-development, and renovation company in a multi-state dispute concerning the use of its name by a former shareholder. A resolution was obtained shortly after filing a lawsuit seeking a temporary restraining order, temporary injunction, and permanent injunction.
- Successfully defended both a no-evidence and a traditional motion for summary judgment moving to dismiss all claims filed by a mixed-use real estate developer against its former joint-venture partner.