



James M. Bettis, Jr.

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Education

J.D. from The University of Texas School of Law
B.A. from The University of Texas

Bar Admissions

Texas
United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit
United States District Court for the Eastern, Northern,
Southern and Western Districts of Texas

Related Practices

Environmental
Regulatory Law
Litigation
Arbitration
Construction Litigation
Director & Officer Litigation
Energy Litigation
Insurance Litigation
Personal Injury & Wrongful Death

Related Industries

Construction
Energy

Overview

Jim maintains an active complex commercial litigation practice with an emphasis on contract disputes, personal injury defense and insurance coverage matters. As a seasoned trial attorney with a broad range of experience, his practice focuses on defending companies active in the oil and gas, refinery, construction, petrochemical and pipeline industries.

Jim regularly represents some of the world's leading energy infrastructure and petrochemical companies, including Kinder Morgan and Chevron Phillips Chemical, in complex contract disputes and personal injury claims. His long-standing relationships with these companies is attributed to his ability to build lasting partnerships with his clients. This allows him to become entrenched in their day-to-day business activities and goals, which in turn better positions him when it comes time to defend clients in the courtroom.

In addition to Jim's extensive commercial litigation practice, he also represents a broad range of policy holders, from family-owned businesses and individuals to international corporations, in insurance issues related to coverage disputes, bad faith cases, disputes involving the Texas Insurance Code and claims for failing to settle within policy limits.

Jim's complex commercial litigation practice, combined with his insurance experience, enables him to successfully represent clients in multi-million dollar cases, with favorable and prompt results. Over the course of his nearly 30-year career, Jim has earned the respect of his peers, and he is called upon to serve as an expert, a mediator or arbitrator.

Insurance
Manufacturing

Achievements

Thomson Reuters – Texas Super Lawyers (2012, 2017-2020)

Woodward/White, Inc. – Best Lawyers in America, Insurance Law (2021-2025)

Memberships

Houston Bar Association
State Bar of Texas

Experience

Insurance Dispute

Represented the owner of a bucket truck company that services power lines in an insurance coverage dispute. The plaintiff was severely injured on the job and initially the bucket truck company's two insurance providers – commercial and auto – denied defense and coverage. Munsch Hardt filed breach of contract and declaratory judgements against both providers, which ultimately led one of the providers to re-assume the defense and settle the lawsuit. Without insurance coverage, this company would have been put out of business by the claim.

Insurance Dispute

Represented a manufacturer of drilling systems for the oil and gas industry who was sued by hundreds of plaintiffs and dozens of defendants for exposure to naturally occurring radioactive material from a pipe scale. Munsch Hardt was retained to handle all aspects of insurance coverage for claims dating back more than 40 years. The Firm successfully obtained all relevant insurance information, placed all primary and excess carriers on notice, handled all workers compensation issues for the individual plaintiffs that turned out to have been employees, and negotiated with all carriers towards a joint cost sharing agreement. Ultimately, the Firm obtained a defense from many of the carriers, and finalized an agreement for the carriers to reimburse the manufacturer for past defense bills and to pay on a going forward basis on an individual percentage basis.

Insurance Dispute

Successfully obtained a very favorable settlement for a well drilling contractor seeking "loss of use" coverage after one of its drilling rigs was damaged in a flood. This was significant win because there wasn't any case law on point. Instead, Munsch Hardt relied upon insurance principals related to a different type of insurance policy for a different type of claim.

Insurance Dispute

Represented a demolition contractor who was hired to implode a building in downtown Houston, Texas. Something went wrong during the highly-publicized implosion, creating damage to an adjacent parking garage and surrounding buildings. After being denied coverage from its insurance provider based upon a professional liability exclusion, Munsch Hardt convinced the insurance provider to settle the claim.

Insurance Dispute

Represented a bar in an insurance defense case in which a patron, after departing from the bar, was involved in a fatal automobile accident. The bar did not have a dram shop (liquor liability) coverage; however, Munsch Hardt successfully obtained a defense for both the owner and the bar under personal auto policy of the bar owner. This effectively saved the bar from going out of business.

Newsroom

Press Release: Fifty-Seven (57) Munsch Hardt Attorneys Honored in 2025 Best Lawyers in America Directory

Press Release: 'Best Lawyers in America®' Names 50 Munsch Hardt Attorneys to its 2024 List and Two as 'Lawyers of the Year'

Press Release: Munsch Hardt Attorneys Honored as 2023 'Best Lawyers in America®,' 'Ones to Watch', and 'Lawyer of the Year'

Press Release: Munsch Hardt Attorneys Honored as 2022 'Best Lawyers in America', 'Ones to Watch' and 'Lawyer of the Year'

Press Release: Fourteen Munsch Hardt Attorneys Named to 2020 Texas Super Lawyers List

Press Release: Munsch Hardt Attorneys Honored as '2021 Best Lawyers in America' and 'Ones to Watch'

Press Release: Sixteen Munsch Hardt Attorneys Recognized on 2019 Texas Super Lawyers List

Press Release: Fourteen Munsch Hardt Attorneys Included on 2018 Texas Super Lawyers List

Press Release: Fourteen Munsch Hardt Attorneys Recognized as 2017 Texas Super Lawyers

Press Release: Munsch Hardt Welcomes Five Attorneys from Harrison Bettis McFarland to Houston Office

Press Release: Munsch Hardt, Harrison Bettis McFarland Join Forces to Propel Strategic Growth in Texas