

# “BEST LAWYERS IN AMERICA” FEATURES 17 BELL NUNNALLY ATTORNEYS

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***The Best Lawyers in America® 2019* (Copyright 2018 by Woodward/White, Inc., of Aiken, S.C.) features 17 Bell Nunnally & Martin LLP attorneys – Alana K. Ackels, Jeffrey J. Ansley, Mikel J. Bowers, Jean Pierre Boyea, George W. Coleman, W. Bennett Cullum, Nikki Hurst Gibson, Karen L. Hart, Jeffrey S. Lowenstein, Danica L. Mathes, Cassandra G. McLaughlin, Larry L. Shosid, James A. Skochdopole, John D. Smart, Christopher B. Trowbridge, Beverly A. Whitley and Tammy S. Wood. Notably, this is the 37<sup>th</sup> consecutive selection for Coleman; the 13<sup>th</sup> for Mathes; and the 7<sup>th</sup> for Bowers, Cullum, Lowenstein and Skochdopole.**

“As a firm we pride ourselves on offering clients a wide-array of complementary practice offerings, each best-in-class and all focused on practical and efficient problem solving,” said James Skochdopole, managing partner of Bell Nunnally. “The depth and breadth of this list is representative of our focus, and we are honored by the trust our clients and peers continue to place in us.”

## Partners

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Ackels (Litigation – Labor and Employment) is a member of the firm's Labor, Employment and Benefits and Litigation practices. Ackels advises employers on how to minimize risk, protect their businesses, and navigate the multitude of state and federal laws governing the employer-employee relationship. She prepares employment agreements, confidentiality agreements, non-competition agreements, employee handbooks, and other policies that mitigate risk for employers. She also prepares injury benefit plans for employers who choose to opt out of workers compensation in Texas. Licensed in Texas and California, she has extensive experience litigating disputes in state and federal courts and arbitration. She routinely represents employers in claims involving discrimination, harassment and retaliation; wage and hour claims;

trade secret litigation; and non-compete matters. Ackels also litigates complex commercial matters, non-subscriber negligence claims and employee benefit challenges under ERISA. She earned both her B.A. (2006) and J.D. (2009) at Southern Methodist University.

Ansley (Criminal Defense: White-Collar) leads the firm's White Collar and Regulatory Defense practice. A former federal criminal prosecutor, he focuses on white collar criminal and regulatory defense in high-stakes cases and investigations and litigation involving allegations of health care fraud, securities fraud and other complex criminal and regulatory charges. Ansley regularly defends his clients against the U. S. Department of Justice, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority and other federal and state agencies. He also conducts internal investigations and reviews. Ansley received his J.D. from Southern Methodist University's Dedman School of Law (1994) and his B.A. from Texas A&M University (1991).

Bowers (Litigation – Construction) is an experienced trial lawyer whose practice encompasses a wide range of commercial litigation matters, with emphasis on construction- and oil and gas-related disputes. His clients include homeowners associations, residential and commercial contractors, health care companies, oil and gas exploration companies and mid-size-to-large business organizations. Bowers received his J.D. from Southern Methodist University's Dedman School of Law (1987) and his B.J. from the University of Texas at Austin (1983).

Boyea (Real Estate Law) represents commercial landlords of shopping centers and mixed-use developments (retail/office and retail/residential), as well as corporate office tenants, in a broad range of transactional matters from the sale and acquisition of properties to development and refinancing, with a special emphasis on retail & office leasing and day-to-day landlord/tenant issues. He works with landlords, tenants, developers, lenders and investment entities, and has extensive experience with land acquisition and development, limited liability companies, joint ventures, limited partnerships and real estate-related financing transactions, as well as mechanic's liens, easements, foreclosures, workouts, property owners' associations and mortgage fraud cases. Boyea earned his J.D. from the University of Texas School of Law (1994), his M.P.A. from the University of Texas at Austin (1994) and his B.S.M.E. from Rice University (1986).

Hart (Commercial Litigation) is a business attorney with over a decade of experience litigating commercial disputes. She counsels clients on real estate and landlord-tenant matters as well as various contract and business disputes, providing guidance on business legal matters including: lease, purchase and sale; brokerage and property management disputes; specific performance claims; commercial evictions; *lis pendens*; lien and bond claims; lien priority disputes; promissory note claims; commercial foreclosures; bankruptcy claims; professional ethics and liability matters; bills of review; confidentiality, non-competition and non-solicitation agreements and related disputes and injunctive proceedings; and business tort claims – including tortious interference with contracts and business relationships, civil theft, fraud and misappropriation of trade secret claims. She received her J.D. from the University of Texas School of Law (2001) and her B.A. from the University of Texas at El Paso (1997).

Lowenstein (Commercial Litigation, Litigation – Intellectual Property) formerly served as the chair of the firm's Litigation Section for 9 years. He is currently a member of the firm's Management Committee. He has

tried commercial disputes in state courts, federal courts and arbitrations across the country. With the assistance of specialists in the firm, Lowenstein frequently advises clients on internal investigations, risk assessment and avoidance, data secrecy and data security, mergers and acquisitions, financing, intellectual property transactions, estate and tax planning, employment issues and immigration issues. He has substantial experience in disputes involving complex business issues, contracts, intellectual property, all facets of real estate and business divorces. Lowenstein earned his J.D. (1998) and his B.A. (1995) from the University of California, Los Angeles.

Mathes (Entertainment Law – Motion Pictures & Television, Entertainment Law – Music) is the head of the firm's Intellectual Property, Entertainment, Advertising and New Media practice areas and has been listed in *Best Lawyers* each year since 2007. Some of the most well-known national and international brands and biggest names in entertainment have trusted Mathes with their creative assets and brand reputation. She has represented Grammy-winning recording artists, songwriters and producers, Oscar-nominated filmmakers, authors whose books regularly appear on *The New York Times* Best Sellers list, independent record labels and music publishers, amateur and professional athletes, reality television show participants, mobile app and game developers, e-commerce, interactive media and startup ventures, as well as international food, beverage, toy, cosmetics, fashion, literary publishing, retail and traditional media companies. A frequent presenter and author, including on her I'M WITH THE B(R)AND® blog ([imwiththebrand.guru](http://imwiththebrand.guru)), Mathes also served as an Adjunct Professor of Entertainment Law at Washington University School of Law for five years. She earned her J.D. from Washington University School of Law (2001) and her B.A. from DePauw University (1998), and is licensed in both Texas and Missouri.

McLaughlin's (Real Estate Law) commercial real estate practice ranges from large leasing transactions (office, warehouse-flex, retail, solar, wind and desalinization plants) through acquisitions, dispositions, land use and development. Her clients include Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs), such as medical office building, industrial warehouse and storage REITs. McLaughlin also represents individuals and corporations in their real estate investment property needs. She earned her J.D. from the University of Texas School of Law (2001), her M.S. from the University of Michigan (1994) and her B.A. from the University of Texas at Austin (1991).

Shosid (Commercial Finance Law, Mergers & Acquisitions Law, Real Estate Law) has extensive experience with mergers and acquisitions, securities offerings (both public and private placements), general corporate representations and various real property and energy transactions. He earned his J.D. from the University of Texas School of Law (1987) and his B.B.A. from the University of Texas at Austin (1984).

Skochdopole (Corporate Law, Mergers & Acquisitions Law, Tax Law) is active in the firm's tax, mergers and acquisitions and corporate practices and serves as managing partner. He is well-versed in structuring, negotiating and closing a wide variety of business transactions, including mergers and acquisitions, divestitures, joint ventures, debt and equity financings and start-ups. Skochdopole has negotiated and drafted a multitude of commercial arrangements, including partnership and LLC agreements; service, supply, vendor and customer contracts; employment-related agreements; and compensation plans. He received his J.D. from Harvard Law School (1986) and his B.A. from Lawrence University (1983).

Smart (Employment Law – Management) represents employers in traditional labor, employment and immigration matters. Board certified by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization, he routinely advises on and litigates claims alleging: unfair competition; violations of non-competition and employment agreements; and defamation, tortious interference with contract, intentional infliction of emotional distress and other tort actions. Smart also regularly reviews employment and severance agreements, employee handbooks and personnel policies. His immigration experience extends to obtaining both immigrant and non-immigrant visas for foreign employees and stakeholders, including those involved in specialty occupations, part of intracompany transfers, tapped to be executives and managers and involved as treaty and trade investors. Smart received his J.D. from the University of Arkansas School of Law (1987) and his B.A. from Vanderbilt University (1984).

Trowbridge (Commercial Litigation) serves as Chairman of the firm's Litigation Section. He is a commercial litigator with a particular emphasis on complex business and intellectual property disputes. In the past few years alone, he has represented his clients in multi-million dollar disputes in state, federal and appellate courts and arbitrations in California, Illinois, New York, Pennsylvania, Louisiana, Arkansas, South Carolina and cities across Texas. One of Trowbridge's recent verdicts, a \$23.1 million jury verdict on behalf of national cattle broker in a fraud matter involving a check kiting scheme and fraudulent cattle transactions, was named one of the Top 100 Verdicts of 2017 by Verdict Search. Trowbridge's litigation docket routinely includes business torts including theft of trade secrets; trademark, trade dress and patent infringement; non-compete matters; private equity, investment and securities litigation; the pursuit of injunctive relief; FINRA and AAA arbitrations; and state and federal appeals. In addition to his U.S. docket and through the firm's involvement with the Legalink global law firm network, Chris has a growing international practice. Sample engagements include representation of a creditor in a cryptocurrency-related bankruptcy in Tokyo and a range of international discovery and U.S. enforcement of international judgments and arbitration awards. In addition, Chris has been published across the globe on topics such as cryptocurrency and international e-discovery. Clients view Chris as a link between Texas' robust business environment and the interconnected global economy. He earned both his J.D. (1998) and his B.B.A. (1995) from Baylor University.

Whitley (Appellate Practice, Commercial Litigation) has more than two decades of experience in commercial litigation and appeals. She has handled state and federal appeals at all levels. Whitley has extensive experience handling injunctions, trials, and appeals in cases involving non-competition agreements. She successfully argued a landmark non-compete case before the Texas Supreme Court. Whitley has handled numerous commercial temporary restraining order (TRO) injunction cases and appeals. She obtained a TRO, a temporary injunction and a permanent injunction blocking public use of an agricultural railroad crossing, and successfully defended the temporary injunction in an interlocutory appeal. Whitley has tried a number of bankruptcy adversary proceedings and frequently handles bankruptcy appeals. Whitley obtained a judgment ordering a tax refund and defended a subsequent appeal in the first reported decision allowing a taxpayer to collect an ad valorem tax refund under Section 31.11 of the Texas Tax Code. She earned both her J.D. (1990) and B.A. (1986) from Louisiana State University.

Wood (Commercial Litigation) is a trial lawyer who concentrates her practice in commercial and employment litigation. She also assists clients on employment-related matters outside of the courtroom, including: investigating employee complaints; responding to complaints made by employees to governmental entities; advising on potential employee discipline; and drafting employee handbooks, policies and procedures and severance agreements. Wood also represents fiduciaries and beneficiaries in probate court litigation. She has first chaired jury trials, bench trials and arbitration proceedings to final judgment or award throughout Texas.

Wood received her J.D. from Southern Methodist University's Dedman School of Law (1993) and her B.S. from Texas Woman's University (1990).

## Senior Counsel

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Gibson (Commercial Finance Law) has extensive experience representing financial institutions and borrowers in commercial lending transactions; structuring, drafting and negotiating loan documentation for asset-based financing transactions, including accounts receivable, inventory and equipment secured loan transactions; senior and subordinated debt financings; securities as collateral; and real estate transactions. She received her J.D. from Southern Methodist University's Dedman School of Law (1985) and her A.B. from Duke University (1980).

## Of Counsel

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Coleman (Corporate Law, Mergers and Acquisitions Law) has extensive experience in structuring and negotiating complex business transactions and in negotiating complex partnership and LLC structures, including handling the acquisition and disposition of businesses, the financing of business activities, the creation of business entities, family succession planning and assisting committees of boards of directors. In addition, he is co-author of a treatise on Texas limited liability companies under the Texas Business Organizations Code and an Adjunct Professor at Texas A&M School of Law. Coleman earned his LL.B. from Southern Methodist University's Dedman School of Law (1963) and his B.S. from the University of Oklahoma (1961).

Cullum's (Trusts and Estates) practice is focused on estate planning and probate matters, with support for civil litigation related to trust and estate matters. With more than 40 years of experience, he routinely handles matters involving the preparation of wills, trust agreements, family limited partnership agreements and other estate planning documents and the probate of wills and administration of estates. Cullum provides substantive law support in civil litigation arising out of the administration of estates and trusts. He earned his J.D. from the University of Texas at Austin (1974) and his A.B. from Stanford University (1971).

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