



Senior Counsel | Providence, RI | Boston, MA

John A. Tarantino

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Overview

John has been recognized by Best Lawyers of America, Chambers USA, Benchmark and Lawdragon as one of the top attorneys in the country. He has tried many high-profile cases, both civil and criminal, in state and federal courts, and has also argued many appeals in state and federal appellate courts. His clients are broad-based and diverse: governors, senators, representatives, CEOs, boards of directors, entrepreneurs, major chemical companies, railroads, athletes, sport coaches and managers and leading real estate developers. His practice areas are equally broad-based and diverse: complex issues of constitutional law, antitrust and trade regulation, [intellectual property](#), [product liability](#), [toxic torts](#), [business and commercial disputes](#), [white collar crime](#), [employment law](#) and sports law. John is equally proud of the work that he has done for clients who are not as famous or well known, often at reduced rates or on a *pro bono* basis, and he has received numerous awards and recognitions for his *pro bono* work.

John's passion and dedication to his work and his profession are well known. He lectures frequently on trial practice and techniques and is a leading author of 11 legal texts and more than 200 articles on product liability, discovery, evidence, procedure, legal ethics and trial strategy.

He has won significant trial victories for Atlantic Richfield Company, the Governor of Rhode Island, the Rhode Island Senate, the House of Representatives and many other entities and individuals in cases ranging from toxic tort, to constitutional law, to bribery and wire fraud, to ethics violations, to voting law and redistricting.

Experience

- John successfully defended Atlantic Richfield Company in the longest jury trial in Rhode Island history, the landmark litigation brought by the Attorney General against the former manufacturers of lead pigment used in paint. John's client was the only defendant found not responsible by the jury. On appeal, John successfully defended the verdict as well.
- John successfully represented the Governor, the Treasurer and the Employers' Retirement System in constitutional challenges brought by various labor unions and retiree associations to changes made to the state's general pension statute.
- In one of the most high-profile and notorious criminal investigations in recent Rhode Island history, "Plunder Dome," John successfully defended the former Mayor of Providence's Chief of Staff on federal bribery, corruption and conspiracy charges, obtaining a not guilty verdict on all counts.
- In a case of first impression, John successfully defended the former Rhode Island Senate President on ethics charges. The Rhode Island Supreme Court ruled that the Rhode Island Constitution's speech in debate clause barred the Ethics Commission from charging a legislator for how he or she participated in the legislative process and voted on legislation.

- In two federal court trials (one in Rhode Island and one in Massachusetts), John defended a gaming facility on charges of “honest services” mail and wire fraud and conspiracy.
- John defended a national utility company on federal charges of violation of environmental laws relating to the storage of liquid mercury and mercury sealed regulators.
- In a case of first impression, John convinced the Rhode Island Supreme Court that the so-called “pollution exclusion” does not bar coverage for policy holders unless the policy holder intended to cause pollution and environmental damage to its property.
- John successfully defended a municipality on wrongful death claims brought against it by the widow and children of a police officer who was killed by a fellow police officer in a SWAT team hostage-taking exercise. He was able to obtain summary judgment against the municipality’s insurance carrier, which had denied coverage for the claim, and also defended the municipality on the underlying merits case.
- John has obtained several multi-million dollar judgments for an international finance company against various borrowers and guarantors in the areas of hotel and entertainment financing, resort financing, mobile home financing, manufactured home financing, and equipment financing, and has defended numerous claims alleging lender liability, breach of good faith and fair dealing, and breach of consumer protection laws.
- John successfully defended the Mayor of the Town of North Providence in an ethics investigation concerning the alleged awarding of no-bid town construction contracts to a business associate. After investigation by the Ethics Commission, John filed a motion to dismiss, and following hearing, the Ethics Commission determined that there was no probable cause to conclude that a violation of the Code of Ethics occurred.
- In a case of first impression, John defended a Chinese pharmaceutical company in a multi-jurisdictional criminal case, “Operation Raw Deal,” which focused on charges that the Chinese pharmaceutical company had engaged in a variety of criminal actions, including the illegal importation and distribution of human growth hormone. The Chinese pharmaceutical company was named in the Major League Baseball investigative Mitchell Report as the alleged supplier of hGH products that allegedly had been used improperly by a variety of present and former Major League Baseball players.
- John successfully defended a well-known plaintiffs’ personal injury lawyer and his firm, who advertise nationally, against charges of unauthorized practice of law and ethics violations and obtained a favorable ruling from the Rhode Island Supreme Court that the law firm could register to do business in the State of Rhode Island and provide services to clients there.
- John defended a major chemical company at trial and on appeal on claims that an herbicide that it manufactured caused cancer. In the course of the representation, the Rhode Island Supreme Court adopted the *Daubert* standard for the admission of expert and scientific evidence in Rhode Island courts.
- John has defended a number of clients in class action and multi-district litigation, including claims of securities violations, ERISA violations, lender liability, defective products, defective pharmaceuticals, and medical devices.
- John defended a major health care insurer on antitrust charges brought by an out of state hospital claiming the insurer violated antitrust laws by keeping the hospital from purchasing a Rhode Island hospital and establishing a network here.
- John obtained a defense arbitration award in favor of a major real estate developer in a multi-million dollar claim of fraud, misrepresentation and deceit brought by a business associate and partner.
- John successfully defended an international defense contractor on claims brought by a Saudi National claiming a commission on the sale of weapons.
- John successfully defended a major regional real estate developer in both state and federal courts on claims by tenants and former tenants for alleged violations of state and federal statutes and claimed exposures to toxic substances.
- John successfully defended a major toy company in a federal court law suit brought by an alleged inventor involving claims alleging misappropriation of trade secrets.
- John successfully defended the Rhode Island Lottery on various federal, state and constitutional issues relating to sports gaming in Rhode Island.

- John represented the Commissioner of Education in establishing her power to take control of the Providence Schools, under the Crowley Act.

Credentials

Practices

- [Health Care](#)
 - [Health Care Regulation and Litigation](#)
- [Cyber and Data Security](#)
- [Litigation](#)
 - [Complex & Business Litigation](#)
 - [Products Liability/Toxic Tort/Mass Torts](#)
 - [Appellate](#)
- [Insurance Coverage & Defense](#)
- [Gaming](#)
- [Hospitality](#)

Education

- Boston College (J.D., *magna cum laude*, 1981)
- Dartmouth College (A.B., *magna cum laude*, 1976)
- Kings College, University of London

Admissions

- Rhode Island
- Massachusetts
- U.S. District Court, District of Rhode Island
- U.S. District Court, District of Massachusetts
- U.S. District Court, District of Connecticut
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the First, Third and Ninth Circuits
- U.S. Supreme Court

Honors

- *Best Lawyers' Lawyer of the Year 2025, Mass Tort Litigation / Class Actions – Defendants.*
- *Best Lawyers' Lawyer of the Year 2024, Product Liability – Defendants & Personal Injury Litigation – Defendants, Providence.*
- *Best Lawyers' Lawyer of the Year 2021, Litigation – Banking and Finance. Providence.*
- Senior Fellow, Litigation Counsel of America.
- Professional Excellence in the Law, Civil Trial, Rhode Island Monthly, 2019 – 2025.
- Listed in "America's Top 100 Attorneys," 2016.

- Selected by his peers for inclusion in the 2006–2026 editions of *The Best Lawyers in America*® in the fields of Commercial Litigation, Personal Injury, Appellate Law, Mass Tort Litigation, Product Liability Litigation, Bet-the-Company Litigation and White Collar Criminal Defense.
- *Best Lawyers* 2020 Lawyer of the Year, Bet-the-Company Litigation and Product Liability Litigation – Defendants, Providence.
- *Best Lawyers*’ 2018 Lawyer of the Year, Appellate Practice and Personal Injury Litigation – Defendants, Providence.
- *Chambers USA* America’s Leading Business Lawyers (Star Performer status).
- *Lawdragon* 500 (recognized as one of 500 leading lawyers in America and one of top 500 trial lawyers in America for 10 consecutive years and inducted into Hall of Fame in 2016).
- Named one of the Top 10 Lawyers in America by *Lawyers Weekly USA* 2003.
- Ralph P. Semonoff Award (Rhode Island Bar Association’s highest award for civility, professionalism and outstanding advocacy).
- Recipient, 2003 Award of Merit for outstanding service to the legal profession and to the Rhode Island Bar Association.
- Recipient, 2008 Equal Justice Award, Rhode Island Legal Services.
- Exceptional Performance Citation received from Defense Research Institute, 2004.
- Recipient, Boston College Law School 75th Anniversary Alumni Award, 2006.
- Named a Rhode Island *Super Lawyer*, 2007–2025.
- Named “Commercial Litigation Lawyer of the Year – USA 2011” by *Finance Monthly Magazine*.
- *Best Lawyers*’ 2012 Lawyer of the Year, Appellate Law, Providence.
- *Best Lawyers*’ 2016 Lawyer of the Year, White Collar, Providence.
- *Best Lawyers*’ 2017 Lawyer of the Year, Bet-the-Company Litigation, Providence.
- Selected as a local litigation star of *Benchmark Litigation* and *Benchmark Appellate*, 2013 – 2021.
- AV Rated by *Martindale-Hubbell*, its highest rating for attorneys.
- Justice Assistance 2023 Edward V. Healey Lifetime Achievement Award.
- Partnership Award, Rhode Island Black Business Association.
- Leadership Rhode Island Servant Leadership Award 2022.

Professional Affiliations

- Fellow, American College of Trial Lawyers
- Fellow, International Academy of Trial Lawyers
- Member, American Board of Trial Advocates
- Member, Trial Law Institute, Litigation Counsel of America.
- Member, Diversity Law Institute, Litigation Counsel of America.
- Barrister, Order of Justitia, Litigation Counsel of America.
- Advocate, Order of Certus, Litigation Counsel of America.
- President, Rhode Island Bar Association – July 1997 – June 1998.
- President, New England Bar Association – October 2002 – October 2003.
- President, Defense Counsel of Rhode Island – June 2003 – June 2004.
- President, Rhode Island Bar Foundation – June 2005 – June 2011.
- Chair, Rhode Island Bar Association, Client Security Fund Committee, June 2011 – 2025.

- Fellow, Rhode Island Bar Foundation.
- Fellow, American Bar Foundation.
- Fellow, International Society of Barristers (State Chair).
- Fellow, National Conference of Bar Presidents.
- Member, American Board of Trial Advocates.
- Founding Member and Former Regent, National College for DUI Defense.
- Member, Sports Lawyers Association.
- Member, Justinian Society.
- Member, St. Thomas More Society.
- Member, Dartmouth College Lawyers' Association.
- Member, Defense Research Institute.
- Member, Federal Bar Association.

In The Community

- Managing Trustee, Papitto Opportunity Connection (2002-present).
- Managing Director, The John and Pat Tarantino Charitable Foundation (2023-present).
- Managing Director, Iylon Foundation.
- CEO, Iylon Precision Oncology LLC (2023-present).
- Poverello Center, Board of Directors (2005 – 2011).
- Member of Executive Committee, Capital Campaign of Franciscans of the Holy Name Province (2002 – 2004).
- Boston College Law School Board of Overseers (2005 – 2012).
- National Judicial College, Board of Visitors (2006 – 2103).
- Member, United States Supreme Court Historical Society, State Chair (2007-2008).
- Federal Hill House Association, Board of Directors (1995 – 2002).
- St. Mary's Home for Children, Board of Directors (1992 – 2000).
- Boston College Law School, Alumni Association.
- Dartmouth College, Alumni Association.
- American Inns of Court, Alumni Association.
- Member, Leadership Rhode Island, 1991 and Alumni Association.
- Kentucky Colonels.
- Former Member, Texas Ranger Law Enforcement Association.
- Leadership Rhode Island, Lambda Class.
- Board of Trustees, Roger Williams University (2001- 2006).
- Board of Trustees, Roger Williams University Law School (2003 – 2006).
- Board of Directors, Watch Hill Partners (1999 – 2002).
- Managing Director, Res Nova Publications (1987 – 1993).
- Managing Member and President, SPA Ventures LLC (2001 – 2013).

- Member, Fortunna Council, 2026.