

# Big Guns

Washington lawyers may tend to dress alike, but they're not all the same when dealing with problems. Here are 30 of the very best—plus 800 more who are close behind. Hang on to the list—when you really need a lawyer, you might want one of these.

By Kim Isaac Eisler

Some of those on our list of Washington's top lawyers have represented presidents. Others have defended murderers and thieves. Some might have represented—or might yet represent—you.

If the United States is a nation of laws, Washington is a city of lawyers: There are more here per capita than in any other city in the world. There are more here than in many entire countries.

This list of top lawyers in private practice skews toward those who represent people as opposed to corporations. It excludes some important but technical fields of law. But some areas of corporate and constitutional law are so bound up with our city that we couldn't ignore them. That includes lawyers who practice before the Supreme Court, the Securities and Exchange Commission, and federal agencies like the Food and Drug Administration and the Federal Communications Commission.

Most people get through life without having to hire an attorney for anything more serious than drawing up a will or overseeing a real-estate transaction. But

legal trouble can happen to anyone—and often does without warning. Lots of Washingtonians are arrested on criminal charges, from drunk driving to vehicular homicide. You might be called to testify before Congress. More common is a letter from the IRS—or from an attorney representing a departing spouse. You can slip and fall on an unshoveled sidewalk—or someone can fall on yours.

One thing you'll discover if you need one of these lawyers: They don't come cheap. For a good criminal-defense lawyer, the floor is close to \$400 an hour. Rates for the top attorneys reach \$1,000 an hour. Most lawyers bill in six-minute increments, meaning a one-minute call counts as six minutes—a tenth of an hour. So if you call a lawyer for a quick question, try to get six minutes' worth of advice.

Divorce lawyers' fees are the hardest to gauge. Some charge more but work fast. Others are relative dawdlers but charge lower rates. A common number here is \$450 an hour. Try to find a busy divorce lawyer. A busy lawyer wants to get on to the next case. If you walk into an empty

waiting room or the attorney tends to ramble, it could get very expensive.

I have spent much of the past 20 years writing about Washington lawyers. I have met, spoken to, and observed thousands of them. I've become friends with a few.

This is the fifth time that *The Washingtonian* has compiled a list of top lawyers. It is created primarily by peer recommendation. We asked, by telephone and e-mail, some 1,000 attorneys who (excluding themselves and members of their firms) the top practitioners in their fields are and whom they would hire to represent them in a range of areas. Then we checked on those people and asked for their recommendations. We invited them to take shots at one another; many availed themselves of the opportunity. One wrote that a colleague "should not be included on any list of best lawyers. No knowledgeable client would or should retain this individual."

In some areas, such as securities law, there is virtual unanimity about who the

Acevedo-Vila against allegations of campaign irregularities. There's talk that five trials in a year might send Green, born ten months before Pearl Harbor, into retirement. Says Green, "When they're over, I'll see if I can still get out of bed."

**25. David Schertler** (Schertler & Onorato). Being charged with a crime is a traumatic—even life-changing—experience, says Schertler, a 51-year-old former prosecutor with an impressive résumé. When clients come knocking, Schertler provides sensitivity and a personal relationship. After his 1982 graduation from law school at the University of Virginia, Schertler worked his way up from trial attorney in the Justice Department to chief of the homicide section in the US Attorney's Office in DC, trying more than 50 jury cases and conducting more than 100 grand-jury investigations along the way.

He founded his and Danny Onorato's litigation firm in 1996. With many members of the old guard in criminal defense nearing retirement, Schertler is viewed by many as the leader of the next generation of top-line defense lawyers.

**26. Elizabeth Espin Stern** (Baker McKenzie). When Stern joined Baker McKenzie in May 2005, the firm gave her "the map room." The daughter of an Ecuadorian diplomat, Stern heads the firm's global practice from an office with an antique map of the world on its domed ceiling. With good contacts

in embassies, consulates, and labor ministries across the current-day map, this University of Virginia law graduate, fluent in Spanish and French, is the preeminent immigration expert on the executive level. Her weekly updates to clients on fast-changing immigration laws and travel restrictions are must reads for many Washington-based business travelers. Trapped at a border crossing? Call Liz.

**27. Joseph Montedonico** (Montedonico, Belcuore & Tazzara). A self-described "frustrated physician," this native Washingtonian believes in medicine—and has spent 35 years defending people who wear white coats. Montedonico says the medical-malpractice climate in DC is such that doctors are quitting practice or moving to Maryland and Virginia, where they perceive juries to be less inclined to rule automatically in favor of plaintiffs. At 70 he remains the most trusted advocate for Washington doctors and the one most respected by his opponents.

**28. Michael C. Durney** (Law Offices of Michael C. Durney). A former deputy assistant attorney general for the tax division at the Department of Justice, Durney is one of the most effective tax lawyers in Washington. From his relaxed offices in Georgetown, the 64-year-old expert is more likely to represent individuals than corporations. His fee—about \$475 an hour—is considerably less than you might pay

at a larger corporate law firm. Durney is equally adept at giving good advice and performing in the courtroom.

**29. Cheryl New** (Sandground New & Lowinger). Operating out of an office overlooking the Tysons Corner area, New has established one of Washington's most effective family-law practices. The firm's founder, legendary divorce "bomber" Mark Sandground, 75, is as irascible as ever. But New, charging \$450 an hour, is quick to sum up a case and, unlike many of her better-known peers, settles cases with dispatch. Her motto: "Diagnose the problem quickly and solve it with the least amount of pain." One of New's chief assets is her partnership with tax whiz **Jeff Lowinger**, a numbers cruncher who likes to keep the ugly side of domestic cases at bay. Together they form a powerful divorce-law duo.

**30. Nancy Fax** (Pasternak & Fidis). When colleagues say Nancy Fax has written the book on estate and probate law, they mean it. With advanced degrees in tax from Georgetown University Law Center, Fax founded the standard, *DC Estates, Trust, and Probate Law Digest*, published by the District of Columbia Bar. Headquartered in Bethesda, Fax has an uncanny ability to untangle confusing technical matters. Her understanding of the law and personalized approach have made her a trusted adviser for couples and families planning their estates.

## 800 Top Lawyers

Here are Washington's best—the top 1 percent—in 28 legal specialties. Where location is not specified, the attorney's principal office is in the District of Columbia. Firm names are not given for solo practices.

### The Wise Ones

For \$800 to \$1,000 an hour, you can get legal advice from former US senators, secretaries of State, even attorneys general. Here are Washington's wise men and women—and some of its most expensive legal talents, though you won't find many of them trying cases these days.

**James A. Baker III**, Baker Botts

**Robert S. Bennett**, Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom (in subsequent references called Skadden)

**Berl Bernhard**, DLA Piper

**Thomas Hale Boggs Jr.**, Patton Boggs

**Plato Cacheris**, Trout Cacheris

**Benjamin R. Civiletti**, Venable

**William T. Coleman Jr.**, O'Melveny & Myers

**Stuart E. Eizenstat**, Covington & Burling

**Jamie Gorelick**, WilmerHale

**Eric H. Holder Jr.**, Covington & Burling

**Earl J. Silbert**, DLA Piper

**Roger C. Spaeder**, Zuckerman Spaeder

**Jacob A. Stein**, Stein, Mitchell & Mezines

**Robert S. Strauss**, Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld (in subsequent references Akin Gump)

**Dick Thornburgh**, Kirkpatrick & Lockhart Preston Gates Ellis

### You're Under Arrest

Sometimes advice isn't enough—you need a great criminal-defense attorney. Expect to pay \$500 to \$800 an hour—with a retainer of \$100,000 to \$200,000—for these white-collar criminal-defense lawyers. Fees are not generally deducted from the retainer—it's more like an insurance policy for the attorney and gets returned after the case.

**E. Lawrence Barcella Jr.**, Paul, Hastings, Janofsky & Walker

**Richard Beizer**, Crowell & Moring

**Richard Ben-Veniste**, Mayer Brown

**Stephen Best**, Dewey & LeBoeuf

**K. Lee Blalack**, O'Melveny & Myers

**Stanley M. Brand**, Brand Law Group

**Lanny A. Breuer**, Covington & Burling

**Michael R. Bromwich**, Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson (in subsequent references Fried Frank)

**Carol Elder Bruce**, Venable

**Ralph J. Caccia**, Powell Goldstein

**Gregory B. Craig**, Williams & Connolly

**John M. Dowd**, Akin Gump

**W. Neil Eggleston**, Debevoise & Plimpton

**Mitchell S. Ettinger**, Skadden

**Thomas C. Green**, Sidley Austin

**Howard W. Gutman**, Williams & Connolly

**James Hamilton**, Bingham McCutchen

**Richard A. Hibey**, Miller & Chevalier

**Adam S. Hoffinger**, Morrison & Foerster

**Mark J. Hulkower**, Steptoe & Johnson

**Philip Inglima**, Crowell & Moring

**N. Richard Janis**, Janis, Schuelke & Wechsler

**William H. Jeffress Jr.**, Baker Botts

**David Krakoff**, Mayer Brown

**Theodore Garrett**, Covington & Burling  
**Michael Goodstein**, Resolution Law Group  
**Joel Gross**, Arnold & Porter  
**Ridgeway M. Hall**, Crowell & Moring  
**Michael Jones**, Kirkland & Ellis  
**Daniel Joseph**, Akin Gump  
**Laurence Kirsch**, Goodwin Procter  
**Chuck Knauss**, Bingham McCutchen  
**Roger Marzulla**  
**David Menotti**, Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman  
**Thomas Milch**, Arnold & Porter  
**Richard Penna**, Van Ness Feldman  
**Patrick Rahe**, Hogan & Hartson  
**Kathy Rhyne**, King & Spalding  
**Perry M. Rosen**, Akin Gump  
**Judson Starr**, Venable  
**Margaret Strand**, Venable  
**William Wehrum**, Hunton & Williams

### On the Air

If you have business with the Federal Communications Commission, you might see some of these people appealing fines, getting new technologies authorized, or working to merge two satellite-radio networks.

**Kathleen Abernathy**, Akin Gump  
**Jim Baller**, Baller Herbst Law Group  
**Eric Bernthal**, Latham & Watkins  
**William Crispin**, Crispin & Greenberg  
**Gary Epstein**, Latham & Watkins  
**Charles Ferris**, Mintz Levin  
**Theodore Frank**, Arnold & Porter  
**Patrick J. Grant**, Arnold & Porter  
**Jennifer Johnson**, Covington & Burling  
**Andrew Lipman**, Bingham McCutchen  
**Richard Metzger**, Lawler, Metzger, Milkman & Keeney  
**John Rogovin**, WilmerHale  
**Michael Senkowski**, Wiley Rein  
**Bryan Tramont**, Wilkinson Barker Knauer  
**Cheryl Tritt**, Morrison & Foerster  
**Philip Verveer**, Willkie Farr & Gallagher  
**Richard Wiley**, Wiley Rein  
**Kathryn Zachem**, Wilkinson Barker Knauer

### What's the Big Idea?

Sometimes something you invented ends up being sold or used by someone you never talked to. Theft of intellectual property, from new windshield wipers to music to computer programs, is common. Some of these lawyers work cases involving millions of dollars and know their way around the Patent and Trademark Office. Many used to work there.

**V. James Adduci**, Adduci, Mastriani & Schaumburg  
**Cory Amron**, Vorys Sater Seymour and Pease  
**Sherri Blount**, Morrison & Foerster  
**Barry Bretschneider**, Morrison & Foerster  
**Michael Clayton**, Morgan, Lewis & Bockius  
**Donald R. Dunner**, Finnegan, Henderson, Farabow, Garrett & Dunner  
**Mark Fox Evans**, Stern Kessler

**Ford Farabow**, Finnegan, Henderson, Farabow, Garrett & Dunner  
**E. Anthony Figg**, Rothwell, Figg, Ernst & Manbeck  
**Alan Fisch**, Kaye Scholer  
**Ann K. Ford**, DLA Piper  
**Joel Freed**, McDermott Will & Emery  
**Cecilia Gonzalez**, Howrey  
**Lawrence J. Gotts**, Paul Hastings  
**Edward Gray**, Morrison & Foerster  
**Margaret Kavalaris**, Cooley Godward Kronish  
**Roderick R. McKelvie**, Covington & Burling  
**Richard McMillan Jr.**, Crowell & Moring  
**Larry S. Nixon**, Nixon & Vanderhyle  
**George Pappas**, Covington & Burling  
**Joseph M. Potenza**, Banner & Witcoff  
**Thomas Queen**, Wiley Rein  
**Thomas Scott**, Goodwin Procter  
**George Sirilla**, Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman  
**James Slattery**, Birch, Stewart, Kolasch & Birch  
**Ybet Villacorta**, Foley & Lardner  
**James Wallace Jr.**, Wiley Rein  
**William Wallace**, Milbank, Tweed, Hadley & McCloy  
**W. Mack Webner**, Sughrue Mion

### School Daze

The Department of Education issues and oversees a maze of rules and regulations, which means lots of lawyers here represent school districts, colleges and universities, and sometimes individuals. A major fight now is whether public schools have to pay for private special-education programs if they don't offer them. Here are people who can help.

**Audrey Anderson**, Hogan & Hartson  
**John F. Cafferty**, Blankingship & Keith; Fairfax  
**Grady Carlson**, Hunton & Williams; McLean  
**Thomas J. Cawley**, Hunton & Williams; McLean  
**Alexander Dreier**, Hogan & Hartson  
**Michael Jeffrey Eig**; Chevy Chase  
**Elizabeth Meers**, Hogan & Hartson  
**William B. Reichardt**; Fairfax  
**Gerald S. Rugel**; Herndon  
**Diana M. Savit**, Savit & Szymkowicz; Bethesda  
**Arthur Schmalz**, Hunton & Williams; McLean  
**Maree Sneed**, Hogan & Hartson  
**Robert Wilkins**, Venable

### Do the Rights Thing

Civil-rights issues can revolve around race, gender, religion, language, disability, and more. Some of these lawyers handle such cases through their firms' pro bono programs, which means a big-firm lawyer will often take an interesting or egregious case for free.

**Roderic Boggs**, Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs  
**Patricia Brannan**, Hogan & Hartson  
**Stephen Chertkof**, Heller, Huron, Chertkof, Lerner, Simon & Salzman  
**David Cole**, Georgetown University Law Center  
**Mark Dann**, Gebhardt & Associates

**Marc Fleischaker**, Arent Fox  
**Kristen Galles**; Alexandria  
**Elizabeth Sara Gere**, Ross, Dixon & Bell  
**Marcia Greenberger**, National Women's Law Center  
**Wade Henderson**, Leadership Conference on Civil Rights  
**Harriet Lipkin**, DLA Piper  
**William Mertens**; Bethesda  
**John Payton**, WilmerHale  
**John Relman**, Relman & Dane  
**Kerry Scanlon**, Kaye Scholer  
**David Wachtel**, Bernabei & Wachtel  
**Christine Webber**, Cohen, Milstein, Hausfeld & Toll

### Not-So-Golden Years

Advancing age brings issues related to Social Security, retirement, nursing homes, and more. Here's a group knowledgeable about the laws that especially affect older people.

**Elliott Andalman**, Andalman & Flynn; Silver Spring  
**Robert Bullock**, Elder & Disability Law Center  
**Jacqueline D. Byrd**, Byrd & Byrd; Bowie  
**Kathleen R. Cossa**; Fairfax  
**Jeffrey J. Downey**, DMG Group  
**William Fralin**, Estate Planning and Elder Law Firm; Arlington  
**Morris Klein**; Bethesda

### Blowing the Whistle

Reporting your company or agency for wrongdoing can get you fired, and it can get you rewarded. Handling whistleblower suits is a specialized legal practice. Most of these attorneys also practice general employment law.

**John Boese**, Fried Frank  
**Alan C. Brown**, Enterprise Business Law Group  
**David Colapinto**, Kohn, Kohn & Colapinto  
**Robert B. Fitzpatrick**  
**Myrrel Hendricks**, Gebhardt & Associates  
**Michael Kohn**, Kohn, Kohn & Colapinto  
**Stephen Kohn**, Kohn, Kohn & Colapinto  
**Mona Lyons**  
**David Marshall**, Katz, Marshall & Banks  
**Kathleen McDermott**, Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal  
**John Phillips**, Phillips & Cohen  
**Rick Robinson**, Fulbright & Jaworski  
**Shelley R. Slade**, Vogel, Slade & Goldstein  
**Jason Zuckerman**, Employment Law Group

### In Uniform

Military life has its own set of challenges—and laws. Here are people who know their way around them.

**Eugene Fidell**, Feldesman Tucker Leifer Fidell  
**Matthew Freedus**, Feldesman Tucker Leifer Fidell  
**Charles Gittins**; Middletown, Va.  
**Mary T. Hall**; Hollywood, Md.  
**Jonathan Katz**, Marks & Katz; Silver Spring  
**James Klimaski**  
**William Koegel Jr.**, Steptoe & Johnson