

Jeffrey R. Blease

Partner

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Jeff Blease is a “Bet the Company” litigator representing an impressive list of national and international clients in some of the most complex, prominent cases around the country. Industry leaders seek Jeff’s extraordinary experience in construction, insurance, real estate, business litigation, and major personal injury cases. Jeff has also represented public sector clients including counties, cities, school districts, and governmental entities. Jeff’s experience includes advising both plaintiffs and defendants, bringing perspective that informs critical legal strategies that win cases.

Jeff is lead counsel in jurisdictions spanning the U.S. He has tried over 35 cases to verdict across 26 state courts over the course of his 35-year career. He also handles arbitrations before various forums and has mediated hundreds of cases under the rules of several different organizations.

Known for his expansive construction practice, Jeff oversees over 40 dedicated construction attorneys handling both transactions and litigation. The team represents owners, national contractors, developers, engineers, subcontractors, and suppliers in virtually any construction-related matter across the country.

As a former full time firefighter and fire prevention education leader, Jeff understands the various fire and life safety codes and has the practical experience to provide strategic advice to clients facing challenges in those areas. Jeff advises manufactures on product recalls, engineering firms and contractors on liability issues in the fire detection, suppression and life safety space.

Clients choose Jeff for his strategic, business-minded approach to resolving sophisticated, and often enormous, legal disputes. Through his exposure to complex, large scale litigation, Jeff developed a tremendous skill for coordinating extensive case portfolios, managing upwards of 80 related cases simultaneously. Clients appreciate his unique skill in crafting and meeting legal budgets, allowing appropriate planning for the best possible outcomes. Jeff’s case management, staffing techniques, and articulate legal skills are second-to-none.

A leader within Foley & Lardner, Jeff is chair of the firm's nationally recognized construction practice and chairs the Partner Compensation Committee. He is also a former Management Committee member and the former chair of the San Diego office's litigation department.

Jeff is a seasoned trial lawyer and a skilled strategist. With dozens of trials across many jurisdictions in the United States, Jeff has a unique ability to adapt to the culture of the geographic location and forum to deliver winning strategies and arguments. Jeff has jury trial experience in multiple cases in state court across the states of California, Minnesota, Colorado and Oregon. He also has jury trial experience in the US District Court in California. He has extensive bench trial experience in many state courts and significant arbitration experience with AAA, JAMS and other private arbitration forums. Whether it is a jury trial, bench trial, single arbitrator or a panel of arbitrators, Jeff focuses on developing the theme and the strategy from day one which controls the development of the case and ultimately the trial. Jeff is nimble when assessing the strength of the themes developed during the case and often will change course if necessary in order to adopt the winning theme and strategy for trial.

Jeff enjoys taking on the most complex cases with highly technical subject matter and distilling it down to information the judge, jury or arbitrator can understand and embrace. He has tried cases involving geotechnical, electrical, mechanical, structural and hydraulic engineering; complex accounting issues; fire code and life safety issues; real property valuation; tax valuation; delay and disruption claims; differing site conditions; landslides, eminent domain and dozens of breach of contract and mechanic's lien cases. Whether it is a short cause bench trial or a six week jury trial, Jeff has navigated the client to success.

Representative Experience

Business Litigation & Dispute Resolution

Jeff's commercial litigation practice spans many disputes, including:

- fire investigations and code issues
- director and officer liability
- employment
- financial fraud and embezzlement
- insurance coverage
- lender liability
- airport regulatory issues
- partnerships
- major personal injury
- property tax appeals
- real estate ownership
- secured transactions
- shareholder disputes
- trade secrets

- unfair competition
- wrongful death

Representative commercial litigation experience include:

- Settled claims by minority shareholder in corporate dissolution action involving successful auto race track
- Multimillion dollar verdict for landowner after six-week trial in eminent domain case
- Settlement in confidential sum after obtaining highest known verdict in an eminent domain case in county history
- Dismissal of all claims in Federal Court against financial institution resulting from alleged fraud and embezzlement scheme
- Settled bad faith insurance case for business client recovering well in excess of the policy limits
- Rule 12(b)(6) dismissal of all claims against chairman of banking corporation in breach of fiduciary duty case
- Defended officers and directors in complex investor litigation
- Advised client on nationwide fire code issues affecting products
- Settled claims arising out of complex secured transaction litigation involving offshore entities

Construction Litigation

Jeff's construction litigation practice includes extensive jury trial, court trial and arbitration of complex and high stakes matters. Jeff uses a cohesive team of attorneys and paralegals who understand the nuances of intensive cases involving:

- airports
- bridges
- biomass power generation
- canals
- commercial and residential subdivisions
- dams
- geothermal facilities
- highways
- hotels
- medical laboratories, including high-rise and mid-rise
- mixed-use commercial and residential mid-rise and high-rise buildings
- schools
- solar facilities
- state of the art data centers
- wind farms
- urban apartment complexes with athletic and commercial components

Representative construction litigation experience includes:

- Represented receiver of national electrical contractor in arbitration concerning \$1.3 billion dollar Utah Data Center constructed by Army Corps of Engineers for National Security Agency
- Represented owner in litigation related to engineering and construction defects in iconic west coast Cathedral complex
- Summary judgment victory for fire protection engineering client sued after a major fire
- Represented a Fortune 100 company in litigation over a refinery project
- Portfolio management of all claims for national multifamily developer
- Summary judgment victory for engineering client on San Diego historic hotel renovation project in a multi-party complex litigation case, avoiding 70-day jury trial and recovering client's costs
- Resolved all claims for owner on \$205 million dollar Boston high-rise medical facility without litigation, despite design issues, significant delays, dozens of unresolved change orders and tens of millions in damages
- Defense verdict after trial in San Diego public works bid dispute between general contractor and subcontractor
- Full recovery of engineering client claims plus attorney fees after client wrongfully terminated for cause by owner on a data center project
- Resolved claims involving design and construction of international airport runway extension
- Resolved claims relating to development of major solar energy project
- Represented major west coast contractor on multiple bridge, freeway and subdivision development projects.

Construction Transactions

Jeff's transactional practice spans "shovel to gavel" matters for owners, developers, engineers, lenders, contractors, subcontractors, and consultants, involving:

- construction management agreements
- consultant agreements
- contracts and subcontracts
- development agreements
- environmental
- insurance
- licensing
- performance
- permitting
- zoning

Representative construction transactional projects include:

- Negotiated owner-contractor agreements on multiple biotechnology projects across the U.S.
- Developed national general contract and subcontract forms used to develop and construct more than 300,000 units of multi-family housing for national developer
- Developed hard and soft cost contracts for constructing high-rise condominiums for owners and contractors
- Negotiated general contracts and construction management agreements for manufacturing facilities, life science facilities, research facilities, office towers and shopping centers
- Negotiated general contracts and subcontracts for schools, water treatment plants and city administration buildings for public owners and contractors
- Negotiated highway, bridge contracts, sewer, water, and storm drain, and other infrastructure contracts for owners and contractors
- Represented owners and developers before County and City Boards and Commissions to secure project permits
- Represented owners and developers to obtain variances, re-zoning and conditional use permits for large commercial, industrial, and residential projects

Awards and Recognition

- American Lawyer (2005-2023) Top Rated Lawyer® in Construction through AV® Preeminent™ Martindale-Hubbell peer review rating (highest performance rating)
- Leading Lawyer in construction by The Legal 500. Clients describe him as “responsive and ethical,” note his “tremendous legal and technical skills,” and recognize his team as a provider of “the highest-level service; its advice is consistently in line with company culture and strategic objectives”
- 2011 San Diego Super Lawyers® in construction litigation

Affiliations

- Sartell, Minnesota City Council, served 10 years and as acting Mayor
- Sartell Public Works Commission, chair
- Sartell Economic Development Commission
- St. Cloud Area Planning Organization
- Central Minnesota Events Center Task Force (Stadium Development)
- American Bar Association, including forum on construction industry
- Associated General Contractors of America, San Diego Chapter
- John E. Simonett Inn of Court

Sectors

- [Energy](#)
- [Manufacturing](#)
- [Oil & Gas](#)
- [Renewables](#)



FOLEY & LARDNER LLP

Practice Areas

- [Business Litigation & Dispute Resolution](#)
- [Construction](#)
- [Litigation](#)

Education

- Colgate University (B.A.)
 - History
- California Western School of Law (J.D., magna cum laude, 1987)

Admissions

- California
- Massachusetts
- Minnesota
- U.S. Court of Appeals, Fourth and Ninth Circuits
- U.S. District Court for Southern, Central, Eastern and Northern Districts of California