



Michael Adamson

Partner

Los Angeles

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Overview

Trial lawyer Michael Adamson has been recognized by *Daily Journal* as a Top 40 Lawyer Under 40 (2022), by *National Law Journal* as a Plaintiff's Attorney Trailblazer (2023), and by *Los Angeles Business Journal's* Leaders in Law series (2021). Michael is a versatile litigator representing plaintiffs and defendants in arbitrations and federal and state courts across the country.

LEGAL VICTORIES

In 2023, Michael secured more than \$330 million in a confidential arbitration for a client in the renewable energy industry. The litigation proceeded from demand to hearing in just 60 days. After speeding through fact and expert discovery, Michael led damages examinations at the hearing and helped secure an award of 100 cents on the dollar of the client's proposed damages model. Michael also secured for the client a full reimbursement of attorneys' fees and expenses from the opposing party, meaning the client effectively paid almost nothing to receive a multi-hundred-million-dollar recovery.

On the defense side, Michael represented Wyle Labs, a subsidiary of KBR, in a trade-secrets case. By the end of a four-week trial, the court had struck most of the damages, and the jury had rejected the most significant remaining claims. Through post-trial briefing, Michael helped defeat some of the jury's few unfavorable findings. The case ultimately settled for a tiny fraction of the tens of millions in damages asserted – a knockout win for Wyle.

Michael has also achieved victories for both plaintiffs and defendants in class actions. He recently helped secure an eight-figure settlement, pending court approval, for a nationwide class of hundreds of policyholders suing PHL Variable Insurance Company for breach of contract. In state court, Michael defended cybersecurity company Bitdefender in a consumer class action

asserting claims under California's Unfair Competition Law. Through mediation, Michael helped negotiate a favorable pre-discovery settlement.

PRO BONO

Michael represents a putative class of disabled students and their families alleging systemic constitutional violations, as well as violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The class seeks injunctive relief in the form of widespread reform to the educational system afforded to disabled students in Virginia. Michael recently argued against defendants' motion to dismiss in this case, which has garnered national media attention from the *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post*, *Politico*, *Associated Press*, and others. [Read more.](#)

BACKGROUND

Michael joined Susman Godfrey after clerking for Judge Gerald Tjoflat on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit. He received his law degree from Duke University School of Law and his undergraduate degree from the Marriott School of Business at Brigham Young University where he studied accounting and later became a Certified Public Accountant.

Before law school, Michael worked in Washington, D.C. as a legislative aide for the Ranking Member of the Senate Finance Committee, specializing in tax, banking, and financial policy.

Notable Representations

Representative Matters

CONTRACT DISPUTES

- **Confidential Arbitration.** Obtained an award of hundreds of millions of dollars in connection with fraud and breach-of-contract claims. The arbitration proceeded from demand to hearing in just 60 days, during which Michael took and defended several depositions, coordinated expert reports and discovery, and examined several witnesses at the hearing, with emphasis on damages issues. In the tribunal's award, the arbitrator fully adopted the client's damages model, awarding 100 cents on the dollar.
- ***Chevron v. California Resources Corp.*** Served as counsel for American multinational energy corporation, Chevron, in a complex contractual dispute regarding oil production and gas balancing. Prior to arbitration, Michael helped achieve a business solution to the dispute on favorable terms for Chevron.

INSURANCE

- ***Advance Trust & Life Escrow Servs, LTA et al. v. PHL Variable Ins. Co., (S.D.N.Y.)*** Represents plaintiffs who are asserting breach-of-contract claims stemming from PHL Variable Insurance Company's unlawful cost of insurance rate increases imposed on plaintiffs' universal life insurance policies. After fully briefing the motion for class certification and starting summary judgment briefing, the parties reached agreement on an eight-figure settlement for the class, pending court approval.
- ***Vida Longevity Fund, LP v. Lincoln Life & Annuity Co. of N.Y. (S.D.N.Y.)*** Represents a certified class of hundreds of policyholders in an action against Lincoln National's New York affiliate, Lincoln Life & Annuity Co. of New York. The court has granted class certification.
- ***TVPX ARS Inc. v. Lincoln Nat'l Ins. Co. (E.D. Pa.)*** Represents a putative class of thousands of insurance policyholders who are asserting breach-of-contract claims against Lincoln National Insurance Company, which failed to reduce cost of insurance rates to reflect improvements in mortality rates, as the contracts require. Michael led efforts to write and file class-certification and Daubert motions, both of which are currently pending decision.
- ***Iwanski v. First Penn-Pacific Life Ins. Co. (E.D. Pa.)*** Serving as counsel to plaintiffs in this matter against Lincoln National's affiliate First Penn-Pacific Life Insurance Co. Michael has led all aspects of discovery and all major briefings. The parties are awaiting the court's decision on pending class-certification and Daubert motions.
- ***Angus v. Lincoln Nat'l Life Ins. Co. (E.D.P.A.)*** Briefed the opposition to Lincoln National's motion to dismiss, which is pending decision, in this putative class action. The plaintiff is alleging breach of contract due to Lincoln's failure to lower cost of insurance rates on universal life insurance policies despite substantial improvements in Lincoln's mortality expectations.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

- ***Positron v. KBRWyle (Cal. Super. Ct.)*** Defended construction company, KBR and its subsidiary Wyle Laboratories against trade secret claims. After developing legal defenses not asserted by prior counsel and trying the case to a jury verdict, the court struck nearly all plaintiff's damages and the case settled for fractions of a penny on the dollar.
- ***Finjan v. Bitdefender (N.D. Cal.)*** Defended cybersecurity company, Bitdefender, in a patent infringement case. Michael argued claim construction, led all aspects of discovery, and took and defended key depositions in multiple countries. The case settled on favorable terms for Bitdefender.

PRO BONO

Honors & Distinctions

- ***D.C. et al. v. Fairfax County School Board et al. (E.D. Va.)*** Represents a proposed class of disabled students and their parents against the Virginia Department of Education and Fairfax County School Board for systemic constitutional violations, as well as violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. [Read more.](#)
- [Plaintiff's Attorney Trailblazer](#), *National Law Journal* (2023)
- [Top 40 Under 40](#), *Daily Journal* (2022)
- Finalist, [Leaders in Law Rising Star](#), *Los Angeles Business Journal* (2021)
- Duke Law Journal, Executive Editor
- Top 5 Percent of Graduating Class
- Governing Faculty Award for Excellence in Business and Finance Law
- Order of the Coif
- Dean's Award
- Former Member of the Board of Directors, Vaccine Ambassadors

Clerkships

Honorable Gerald B. Tjoflat, United States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit

Education

Duke University School of Law (J.D., magna cum laude, Order of the Coif, 2016)

Brigham Young University (B.S., Accounting, , 2011)

Admissions

Bar Admissions

- California
 - New York
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Court Admissions

- U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York
- U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York
- U.S. District Court for Central District of California
- U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit

- Certified Public Accountant

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Memberships*