



Neal S. Manne Partner

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Overview

Neal Manne, former Managing Partner of Susman Godfrey, is one of the premier trial lawyers in America. When *Lawdragon* identified 41 lawyers around the country as "[Lawdragon Legends](#)," it featured Manne on its cover and said,

"He's the olive in the cocktail, the Frank Sinatra of the Rat Pack. Which is to say, he's supremely that guy – the politico, legal genius and community activist without whom there's only a bunch of separate voices."

National Acclaim

Lawdragon's founder called Manne a "brilliant and incisive advocate as well as a leader in the profession." In 2017, when *Lawdragon* named Susman Godfrey as "[America's Leading Trial Firm](#)" and "the nation's most elite litigation firm," it described Manne as "the emotional core of the firm."

Texas Lawyer (ALM) named Manne the "[Attorney of the Year](#)" in Texas in 2017. For four consecutive years *The Best Lawyers in America* (Woodward White Inc.) named Manne the "Lawyer of the Year" in Houston in a major practice area: Antitrust [2019](#) and [2017](#), and Bet-The-Company Litigation in [2018](#) and [2016](#).

Chambers USA (Chambers and Partners), which surveys clients and other lawyers, ranks Manne as one of the nation's best commercial litigators:

"The 'wonderful' Neal Manne serves as a managing partner of the firm. He is regularly called on to represent clients from across the country in trial. He enjoys a 'great reputation.' Manne is "a remarkably bright and analytical lawyer" who is "widely recognized as 'an exceptional trial lawyer' . . . in business-critical disputes, including antitrust and commercial litigation." "The 'excellent' Neal Manne is 'incredibly smart, thoughtful and very strategic.'" "Clients consider the 'passionate and thoughtful' Neal Manne 'one of the finest commercial litigators around' due to his 'astute, incisive and nimble mind,' and his 'rare gift of penetrating dense rhetoric and complex facts' to get quickly to the heart of the matter." A "tenacious litigator" and a "straight-shooter," "Manne has a 'wonderful reputation' among clients and peers, who commend 'his ability to understand the central weakness or strength of the case and convey his judgment with analysis that is appropriately detailed and dispassionate and which carries no more certainty than is warranted by the facts.'" (Quoted material is from Chambers rankings in 2006, 2012, 2016, 2018, 2020 and 2021).

Manne is a Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers, the most prestigious organization of trial

lawyers. In [2017](#) and [2018](#), the College highlighted Manne's pro bono work, writing that "his stellar example of furthering the administration of justice and ensuring access to justice for all, regardless of ability to pay, makes all Fellows of the College proud." In 2019, the Texas Law Review honored Manne with the Leon Green Award, its highest recognition of an alum's outstanding contributions to the legal profession.

Landmark Victories

Manne has an extraordinarily broad and diverse litigation practice, having tried dozens of cases around the country.

Antitrust

Antitrust litigation has been a specialty of Manne and his firm for decades. He has handled cases in a wide range of industries for both plaintiffs and defendants. The *Best Lawyers in America* named Manne the Antitrust Lawyer of the Year in Houston in both 2019 and 2017.

Energy Litigation

Energy litigation takes Manne to the courthouse often. He currently handles a large docket of cases for Chevron, including dozens of coastal land loss cases in Louisiana, and global climate change cases in numerous states. Manne handles major litigation for Vitol in California, Florida, and Puerto Rico. In 2021, after more than a decade of litigation, he won dismissal of a \$3.8 billion claim against Vitol by Puerto Rico's electric power utility. The court also granted Vitol summary judgment on its \$28 million counter-claim.

Constitutional Law

Manne is one of very few lawyers to win constitutional cases at trial. Manne tried a case in San Juan, Puerto Rico challenging the constitutionality of an onerous transfer tax. The federal district judge struck down the statute as unconstitutional, and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 1st Circuit unanimously affirmed. Manne won a landmark ruling in federal court in Houston, affirmed by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, that the system of cash bail used in Harris County, Texas, violated the constitutional rights of thousands of misdemeanor arrestees. Manne tried a case in Austin challenging the constitutionality of Texas statutes prohibiting public companies from selling liquor. The federal district judge agreed that the statutes were unconstitutional.

Tort Law

Manne handles complex tort cases for both plaintiffs and defendants. He helped devise the first mass subrogation claim, which allowed Susman Godfrey to make large recoveries for hundreds of health care plans in national class action litigation involving products as diverse as Vioxx, silicone breast implants and diet drugs. Manne was lead counsel for defendants in the Rio Piedras Explosion Litigation in San Juan, Puerto Rico, directing the efforts of seven law firms in the defense of more than 500 consolidated lawsuits. He has been Walmart's national trial counsel on dozens of high-exposure tort cases involving serious injuries or death.

Class Actions

Manne handles class actions for plaintiffs and defendants throughout the country. He was national trial counsel for Walmart in the largest wage & hour class actions in the country, trying cases from California to Pennsylvania. He tried an antitrust class action for more than 4 months in Alaska for a class of salmon fishermen. In Kentucky, for Rawlings Group, he won the first employment class action ever tried to a jury verdict. He has resolved class actions for Chevron, ACE Insurance, Ltd., and many other companies.

Complex Insurance Coverage Disputes

Manne has represented plaintiffs and defendants in complex insurance coverage disputes, across the country and even internationally. For Equitas, he handled matters involving coverage for environmental

clean-up and asbestos liability. For ACE Insurance Ltd., Manne handled not only insurance matters relating to D&O coverage and product liability coverage, but also matters involving antitrust, aviation, and securities fraud claims. Manne represented Texas Brine Company in insurance coverage litigation arising from an enormous sinkhole in Louisiana. He also has handled complex insurance coverage litigation for Walmart.

Executive Compensation Disputes

When CEO's and other top corporate executives are fired by their companies, they often call on Manne to represent them in breach of contract litigation. Most such cases settle before trial, but when they don't Manne has never lost. He's won trials for Brian Hughes, Paul Beck and Ray Weems against Cambrian Capital Partners; for Dan Pena against Great Western Resources; for Jonathan Carroll against Enserch; and for David Siegel against Budget Group.

Intellectual Property Disputes

Manne handles intellectual property litigation for both plaintiffs and defendants. He defended Dealix on patent infringement claims by Autobyte and won large recoveries for SuperSpeed Software in separate patent infringement cases against Oracle and IBM. Manne defended Walmart at trial on claims of misappropriation of trade secrets brought by a former vendor. The 8th Circuit affirmed the federal district court's judgment in favor of Walmart on the majority of the trade secret claims. The award to the former vendor was smaller than its own attorney's fees, and the vendor went bankrupt.

11th Hour Dependability

As a true trial specialist, Manne often is hired to take over a case from another law firm when trial is imminent:

- CBRE hired Manne to take over a long-running construction dispute as trial neared.
- Walmart brought Manne in to take over a variety of cases as trial approached, including IP disputes, employment class actions, and products liability cases.
- Modern art icon Robert Rauschenberg hired Manne after dozens of his paintings were seized from a museum to satisfy a default judgment. Manne won an injunction ordering the return of the art. When Manne eventually resolved the underlying dispute, a grateful Rauschenberg gave Manne's law firm two of his paintings as a bonus.
- Lloyds, on behalf of the London insurance market, hired Manne to take over and resolve four pollution clean-up coverage cases, some of them pending for many years.
- Aetna hired Manne just before trial in an eight-year-old pollution coverage dispute.
- The Torrington Company hired Manne only months before trial to defend it in a helicopter crash case that had been pending for seven years.
- Precision Airmotives hired Manne just before trial in an airplane crash case.
- Investment banker Frank Benevento hired Manne and his partner Steve Susman a few months before trial to take over his long-running case against RJR Nabisco. They won a large jury verdict for Benevento in federal court in New York.
- A group of Michigan plaintiffs had been in litigation against CENTRA, their family trucking empire, for nearly eight years when they hired Manne and Susman a few weeks before trial. After an eleven-week jury trial in Michigan, plaintiffs recovered an enormous settlement.

Pro Bono Service to the Community

Manne takes seriously the legal profession's mandate that lawyers provide free legal services to the needy. His fast-paced trial practice and his work as a Managing Partner of Susman Godfrey has not stopped him from serving the community and the legal profession.

The American Bar Association (ABA) is the country's largest organization of lawyers. In 2021, Manne received the ABA Litigation Section's [John Minor Wisdom Award](#) for Public Service and Professionalism, given annually to a lawyer who makes "outstanding contributions to the quality of justice in their community, ensuring that the legal system is open and available to all." Also in 2021, Manne received the national ABA's [Pro Bono Publico Award](#), which honored him for his "outstanding commitment to volunteer legal services for the poor and disadvantaged." Manne is the only person ever to receive both awards in the same year. Click [here](#) to watch the ABA's video about Neal, which features some of the extraordinary clients Neal has represented.

In 2020 Manne was recognized by [Texas Appleseed](#) for his pursuit of justice. In 2018, the *National Law Journal* (ALM) profiled Manne's pro bono work, which landed Susman Godfrey on its "[Pro Bono Hot List](#)." In 2017, the American College of Trial Lawyers praised Manne's "incredibly wide range of pro bono cases." The ADL honored Manne with its 2011 "[Jurisprudence Award](#)," given for "commitment to equality, justice, fairness, and community service."

In recognition of Manne's "lifetime of volunteer service to the community," the Houston Bar Association Auxiliary selected Manne as the 2003 recipient of the Leon Jaworski Award. In 1996, he was named the "Distinguished Alumnus for Community Service" by The University of Texas School of Law. Manne's pro bono legal work on behalf of women's rights led the National Women's Political Caucus to honor Manne (along with then-Vice President Al Gore) as the national "Good Guy of the Year" in 1994. The *Houston Press* followed suit, calling Manne "Good Guy Lawyer of the Year" in Houston, and Planned Parenthood gave him its Public Service Award.

On a pro bono basis, Manne has represented:

- a class of indigent individuals held in jail because they could not afford cash bail,
- a refugee resettlement agency successfully opposing the State of Texas' effort to block Syrian refugees,
- an indigent woman facing the loss of her home,
- a religious organization,
- women's health clinics targeted by violent protesters,
- a charitable trust,
- two different exonerated death row inmates,
- Houston's public access television station,
- Muslim jail inmates seeking accommodation of their religion's dietary restrictions,
- the Hobby Center for the Performing Arts,
- the Texas Defender Service, and
- world-renowned artist James Turrell.

In these and other pro bono cases, Manne has donated more than \$2 million of his time to people and organizations who would not otherwise have had high quality legal services. Click [here](#) to read about some of Manne's noteworthy pro bono cases.

Education

- University of Texas (B.A., summa cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa, 1976)
- University of Texas School of Law (J.D., with high honors, 1980)
- Fraternities: Phi Beta Kappa, Friars, University Scholar, Order of the Coif, Chancellors

Clerkship

Law Clerk to The Honorable William A. Norris, United States Court of Appeals, Ninth Circuit, 1980-81

Honors and Distinctions

- Associate Editor, Texas Law Review (1979-80)
- Chief Counsel and Staff Director, U. S. Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Juvenile Justice (1985-86)
- Chief of Staff, U. S. Senator Arlen Specter (1987-88)
- Commissioner, Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission (appointed by Governor Ann Richards, 1992-93)
- Member, Harris County-Houston Sports Authority (appointed by Mayor Bill White, 2005-06)
- “Good Guy of the Year” (co-honoree with then-Vice President Gore), National Women’s Political Caucus (1994)
- Profiled in “45 Under 45,” *The American Lawyer’s* profile of the 45 best young lawyers in America (ALM, 1995)
- University of Texas School of Law “Distinguished Alumnus of the Year for Community Service”(1996)
- Fellow, American College of Trial Lawyers
- Included on *Lawdragon’s* list of The 500 Best Lawyers in America in every year since 2010, and named a “[Lawdragon Legend](#)” in 2016
- Houston Bar Association Auxiliary’s Leon Jaworski Award for “a lifetime of volunteer service to the community” (2003)
- ADL Jurisprudence Award for “commitment to equality, justice, fairness and community service” (2011)
- Recipient of the Leon Green Award by the Texas Law Review in recognition of his outstanding contributions to the legal profession.
- Ranked as one of the [Top 100 Trial Lawyers in America](#) by *Benchmark Litigation* (2020, 2021)
- Ranked as one of the best attorneys in the state of Texas in *Law & Politics* magazine’s “Texas Super Lawyers” (Thomson Reuters, 2003-2021)
- Named one of the best 20 commercial litigation attorneys in Texas in multiple editions of Chambers USA *Awards for Excellence* client guides (based on survey of clients and other lawyers)
- Repeatedly named as one of the top “Bet-the-Company” litigators in Texas by “The Best Lawyers in America” (Woodard White Inc.). The 2016 and 2018 editions named Manne “Lawyer of the Year” for “Bet-the-Company Litigation” in Houston. The 2017 and 2019 editions named Manne “Lawyer of the Year” for Antitrust Litigation in Houston
- Recognized by Texas Appleseed for Pro Bono Service (2020)
- [John Minor Wisdom Public Service and Professionalism Award](#), American Bar Association Litigation Section (2021)
- [Pro Bono Publico Award](#), American Bar Association (2021) Click [here](#) to watch the ABA’s video about Neal, which features some of the extraordinary clients Neal has represented.
- Board of Directors: The University of Texas School of Law Foundation, Houston Bar Foundation (Vice Chair), Texas Law Review Association (President), The Houston Zoo, Houston Food Bank, Texas Freedom Network, Texas Appleseed Foundation, Texas Defender Service (Chair), University of Texas Foundation, Women’s Advocacy Project, Center for AIDS (Chair), Houston Area Women’s Center, People for the American Way, Annie’s List, Houston Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, Congregation Beth Israel,

Houston Arboretum and Nature Center, Anti-Defamation League, Planned Parenthood Federation of America Action Fund, University of Texas Development Board Executive Committee, University of Texas Chancellor's Council Executive Committee, Grand Teton National Park Foundation

Professional Associations and Memberships

Manne has served on numerous boards of directors, both within the legal profession and in the community at large. He was the founding Chair of the Board of Houston's Center for AIDS, Vice Chair of the Houston Bar Foundation, President of the Texas Law Review Association, Commissioner (appointed by Governor Ann Richards) of the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission, member (appointed by Mayor Bill White) of the Harris County Houston Sports Authority, and a member of the boards of directors of many organizations, including The University of Texas School of Law Foundation, The Houston Zoo, the Houston Area Women's Center, People for the American Way, Annie's List, the Anti-Defamation League, the University of Texas Foundation, the Houston Food Bank, the University of Texas Development Board Executive Committee, Texas Defender Service, the Houston Arboretum and Nature Center, the Planned Parenthood Federation of America's Action Fund, the Houston Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, the University of Texas System's Chancellor's Council Executive Committee, Congregation Beth Israel, Texas Appleseed Foundation, the Women's Advocacy Project, the Texas Freedom Network, and the Grand Teton National Park Foundation.

- State Bar of Texas
- State Bar of California
- District of Columbia Bar
- State Bar of Arkansas
- American Bar Association
- Houston Bar Association
- Fellow, Texas Bar Foundation
- Fellow, Houston Bar Foundation
- Texas Law Review Association
- Fellow, American College of Trial Lawyers
- Elected member, American Board of Trial Advocates