



Neal S. Manne Managing Partner

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Overview

Neal Manne, a 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 why:

“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.”

In 2017, *Texas Lawyer* (ALM) named Manne “[Attorney of the Year](#)” in Texas. The *Best Lawyers in America* 2019 (Woodward White, Inc.) named Manne the “Lawyer of the Year” for Antitrust Litigation in Houston. Its 2018 edition named Manne the “Lawyer of the Year” for “Bet-the-Company Litigation in Houston.” Its 2017 edition named Manne the “Lawyer of the Year” for Antitrust Litigation in Houston. Its 2016 edition named him “Lawyer of the Year” for Bet-the-Company” litigation in Houston.

Chambers USA, which surveys clients and other lawyers, ranks Manne as one of the 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.’ (Chambers USA 2018). 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.” (Chambers 2020). “The ‘excellent’ Neal Manne is ‘incredibly smart, thoughtful and very strategic.’” (Chambers USA 2016). “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.” (Chambers USA 2006). “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.’” (Chambers USA 2012).

When *Lawdragon*, in 2017, called Susman Godfrey “[America’s Leading Trial Firm](#)” and “the nation’s most elite litigation firm,” it noted Manne’s extraordinarily broad litigation portfolio and described him as “the emotional core of the firm.”

Manne is a Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers, the most prestigious organization within the Bar. 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." Click [here](#) and [here](#) to read the ACTL's articles about Manne. Manne's fellow trial lawyers have elected him to the American Board of Trial Advocates. Click [here](#) to see *Lawdragon's* feature on Manne as a "Lawdragon Legend" in 2016. Click [here](#) to read *Lawdragon's* May 2013 special profile of Manne. Click [here](#) to read a letter from *Lawdragon's* founder about Manne. Manne regularly has been named a "Super Lawyer" in peer rankings published by *Law & Politics Magazine* (Thomson Reuters, 2003-2019). More than two decades ago, *The American Lawyer* profiled him as one of 45 lawyers in the country "who are making their mark today and will lead the profession tomorrow." Turns out, they were right.

Manne's trial victories have come for both plaintiffs and defendants throughout the country. His jury verdicts have been profiled in the *National Law Journal*, the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *American Lawyer* and many other publications.

Manne is one of few lawyers to win constitutional challenges at trial. As lead counsel to a major retailer, Manne tried a case in San Juan, Puerto Rico in 2016, challenging a tax as violating the Dormant Commerce Clause and the Equal Protection Clause. The federal district judge agreed, striking down the statute in a decision that was front-page news across the country. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 1st Circuit unanimously affirmed. In 2017, Manne tried a case in Austin, Texas, challenging the constitutionality of certain Texas statutes prohibiting public companies from selling liquor. The federal district judge agreed with Manne that the statutes violated the Commerce Clause and Equal Protection (the 5th circuit disagreed). As described in the list (see link below) of Manne's pro bono cases, Manne won a landmark ruling in 2017, affirmed in 2018 by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, that the system of cash bail used in Harris County, Texas, violated the Due Process and Equal Protection rights of the thousands of misdemeanor arrestees Manne represented for free.

Energy industry litigation has taken Manne to the courthouse often. He has won major trials for a variety of well-known energy companies. For plaintiffs, Manne has won cases involving gas contracts, joint ventures pipeline disputes, and oil and gas joint operating agreements. Manne currently handles a large docket of cases for Chevron, including climate change litigation in California, New York, Washington, and Rhode Island.

Manne has been an innovator in tort cases, for both plaintiffs and defendants. He helped devise the first mass subrogation claim, a legal theory which Susman Godfrey has used to make large recoveries for hundreds of health care plans in national class action litigation involving issues as diverse as Vioxx, silicone breast implants and diet drugs. Manne served as 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. Since 2016, Manne has served as Walmart's national trial counsel on a variety of types of tort cases.

Manne has handled huge employment cases for defendants. He won for The Rawlings Company the first employment class action ever tried to a jury verdict in Kentucky. For 6 years, Manne served as as "national trial counsel" for Walmart, trying the largest employment class actions in the country.

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; for

John Dalton against WorldPort Communications; and for David Siegel against Budget Group.

Manne's work on complex insurance coverage disputes often crosses international borders. In cases involving environmental clean-up, officers' and directors' liability, asbestos litigation and products liability, Manne has been hired as lead counsel by many of the largest insurers in the U.S., Bermuda, London and the European continent. Manne represented ACE in both antitrust and securities fraud litigation relating to the use of contingent commissions in the insurance brokerage industry. Manne also represents insureds against their insurers in coverage disputes. Texas Brine Company hired Manne when it was in coverage litigation relating to an enormous sinkhole in Louisiana. Manne has represented Walmart in complex insurance coverage litigation.

Antitrust litigation has been a specialty of Manne and his firm for decades. He has handled cases for both plaintiffs and defendants, in a wide range of industries. The Best Lawyers in America named Manne the Antitrust Lawyer of the Year in Houston in both 2019 and 2017. Manne also handles intellectual property litigation for both plaintiffs and defendants. With his partner Max Tribble, he successfully defended Dealix on patent infringement claims by Autobytel, and won large recoveries for SuperSpeed Software in separate patent cases against Oracle and IBM.

As an extremely experienced trial lawyer, Manne often is hired to take over a case from another law firm as trial approaches. 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 did the same 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, and Precision Airmotives did so in an airplane crash case. Only a few months before trial, Manne and his partner Steve Susman were hired to try investment banker Frank Benevento's long-running case against RJR Nabisco, and won a large jury verdict in New York. A group of Michigan plaintiffs had been in litigation against 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. When the Government of India's oil trading company was hit with a huge adverse judgment in federal court in Houston, the Government hired Manne, who got the judgment vacated and quickly resolved the dispute for a nominal amount. 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, and quickly resolved the underlying dispute. A grateful Rauschenberg gave Manne's law firm two of his paintings as a bonus.

Manne's fast-paced trial practice has not stopped him from finding time to serve the community and the legal profession. In 2018, the *National Law Journal* (ALM) profiled Manne's pro bono work, which landed his firm on *National Law Journal's* "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. His 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, Moslem jail inmates seeking accommodation of their religion's dietary restrictions, the Hobby Center for the Performing Arts, the Texas Defender Service, world-renowned artist James Turrell, and many other individuals and organizations. Manne takes seriously the legal profession's mandate that lawyers provide free legal services to the needy. He has donated more than \$2 million of his own time representing people and organizations who could not otherwise have obtained high quality legal services. Click [here](#) to read about some of Manne's more 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 (1995, ALM)
- 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)
- Ranked as one of the [Top 100 Trial Lawyers in America](#) by *Benchmark Litigation* (2020)
- Ranked as one of the best attorneys in the state of Texas in *Law & Politics* magazine's "Texas Super Lawyers" (Thomson Reuters) (2003-2020)
- 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 "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

- 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