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## Michael Kelso

**Age:** 36

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# Michael Kelso of Susman Godfrey

Lisa Helem, Executive Editor | MP McQueen, Editor | August 12, 2025

### Please describe two of your most substantial, recent wins in practice.

I am incredibly proud of our \$266 million jury verdict for the City of Baltimore in its opioids lawsuit against McKesson and AmerisourceBergen. In the two months before trial, we settled claims with six other defendants, recovering over \$400 million for the city.

We then took the claims against McKesson and AmerisourceBergen to trial, where I put on two witnesses during the jury phase and crossed another during the abatement remedy phase. I also argued against and defeated distributors' directed-verdict motions.

Between the settlements and the jury verdict, the city recovered far more than it would have received if it opted into the global settlements that most cities, counties, and states pursued. Further, the \$266 million jury verdict is, to our knowledge, the only successful verdict in any jurisdiction against opioid distributors.

I'm also very proud of our win on summary judgment for commodities trading firm, Vitol Inc., against claims by Puerto Rico's public utility. Those claims sought to nullify six fuel-supply contracts and recover nearly \$4 billion in payments.

I briefed and argued summary judgment. The court granted our motion, dismissed the public utility's claims with prejudice, and awarded Vitol a full recovery on its \$41 million counterclaim.

### What is the most important lesson you learned as a first-year attorney and how does it inform your practice today?

Everyone should be able to rely on every word you say. Juries, judges, clients, co-counsel, opposing counsel. Make sure every fact you represent is supported by evidence, make sure every case says what you say it does, do what you say you're going to do. If (really, when) you make a mistake, own it honestly and fix it quickly.

### How do you define success in your practice?

Being able to tell my two children with pride what I'm working on and why it's important.

## What are you most proud of as a lawyer?

Our \$260 million jury verdict for the City of Baltimore in its opioids lawsuit in November 2024. Baltimore has the highest opioid overdose death rate in the country and over 30,000 people in the city suffer from opioid addiction—that's 1 in 15 people in Baltimore over age 12.

All in, so far we have secured over \$700 million in relief for the city (the jury verdict plus over \$400 million in settlements with other drug companies). I'm confident that the results we have obtained for Baltimore will make a meaningful difference in real people's lives and in the city more broadly.

## Who is your greatest mentor in the law and what have they taught you?

I've been fortunate to have many and naming one as the greatest would necessarily diminish the contributions of others. I will single out my partner, Shawn Raymond, who has been a wonderful mentor to me since I was an associate and a role model for even longer.

Shawn is an exceptional trial lawyer, advocate, and adviser—but more than that, he's an exceptional human being. He is selfless in giving back to the community—through his service to the Sunflower County Freedom Project, KIPP, and other wonderful organizations—and a devoted husband and father. I admire him greatly.

## Tell us your two favorite songs on your summer music playlist.

My kids set the playlist right now. "Hot-to-Go" by Chappell Roan is very popular with them. On my own time, I've been listening to the live MSG recording of "Midnight Rambler" by the Rolling Stones quite a bit.