

Blake Kolesa

Associate

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A litigator with experience on both sides of complex cases, Blake Kolesa represents businesses facing high-stakes commercial disputes and government investigations. A significant portion of his work is devoted to pro bono litigation, particularly appeals of wrongful convictions. Blake enjoys getting to know the ins and outs of the facts and science behind every case; preparing and deposing witnesses is one of his favorite parts of practice.



In addition to previous experience as a plaintiff's mass tort and class actions attorney, clients value Blake's perspective and insights gained in the chambers of Illinois trial and appellate courts.

As a law student at Loyola, Blake was a fellow of the Institute for Consumer Antitrust Studies and welcomed prospective students as an admissions representative. Before his legal career, he was a community organizer in rural, downstate Illinois.

EXPERIENCE

Clerkships

- Judicial Extern, Hon. Michael Hyman, Illinois Appellate Court, First District (2020)
- Judicial Extern, Hon. Celia Gamrath, Circuit Court of Cook County, Chancery Division (2019)

Representative Engagements – Product Liability & Mass Torts

- Represented international aviation and transportation fleet corporation in product liability matters alleging wrongful death and serious injury.
- Litigated case alleging wrongful death stemming from injuries sustained at a collegiate sporting event that was mutually resolved through mediation.
- Defended inventor-designer of security device alleged to have collected sensitive personal information in violation of the Illinois Biometric Information Privacy Act in a putative class action.

Representative Engagements – Environmental Litigation

- Counseled interstate utility corporation in connection with litigation and regulatory compliance arising from alleged environmental contamination claims brought by residents and the state Attorney General's Office.

Representative Engagements – Commercial Disputes & Litigation

- Obtained partial summary judgment and total jury verdict in a Cook County action in favor of a federally qualified non-profit health care and counseling provider that had purchased real estate later found to be critically structurally unsound and sold through fraud.
- Represented a global insurance brokerage in litigation against former employees, alleging breaches of restrictive covenants and fiduciary duties, tortious interference, and related claims.
- Represented community college in complex construction arbitration and litigation alleging architectural, construction, and project management negligence, resulting in favorable award and settlement for client.

Representative Engagements – Class Actions

- Won dismissal, with prejudice, of putative class action alleging leading consumer insurer's ill-motivated claim denial, breach of contract, violation of the Illinois Insurance Code, and violation of the Fair Housing Act.

Representative Engagements – White Collar Defense, Investigations & Compliance

- Counseled international health care device manufacturer regarding their relationships with foreign import-export firms to ensure compliance with the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act.
- Represented a construction transportation company in a U.S. Department of Justice investigation into bribery of municipal officials and representations concerning underrepresented business enterprise involvement in public and private projects.
- Represented whistleblower physician in investigation and *qui tam* suit alleging misrepresentations violative of the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act and the False Claims Act by international surgical equipment manufacturer.

Representative Engagements – Wrongful Convictions & Pro Bono Service

- Defended against post-trial motions and sought enforcement of a \$25.2 million jury verdict for a client who was wrongfully convicted and incarcerated for 22 years for a crime he did not commit.
- Counseled the family of a fallen Chicago Fire Fighter in conjunction with an investigation into the department's shortcomings contributing to abnormal line of duty death.
- Represent several individuals convicted of serious crimes in Cook County in appeals of wrongfully denied successive post-conviction petitions presenting new, exculpatory evidence.

CREDENTIALS

Education

Loyola University Chicago School of Law, J.D., 2021, *cum laude*
Executive Editor, *Loyola University Chicago Law Journal*
Teaching Assistant, Torts, Contracts, & Criminal Law
Northwestern University, B.S., Education and Social Policy

Bar Admissions

Illinois
U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit
U.S. District Court for the Central District of Illinois
U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois

Professional Memberships

American Bar Association
Chicago Bar Association
Young Lawyers Section, Director
Illinois State Bar Association
Civil Practice & Procedure Section Council
Young Lawyers Division Section Council

PUBLICATIONS & PRESENTATIONS

"Client Update on BIPA," (co-author) *RSHC Client Alert* (May 20, 2024)
"Tag You're @It: Creative Service with #SocialMedia", (co-author) Illinois State Bar Association's *Young Lawyers Division Newsletter* (February 2024, vol. 68, no.7)
"*Snyder v. U.S.* and Gratuities under 18 USC § 666," (presenter) RSHC White Collar Practice Team (January 18, 2024)
"October 2023 RSHC Client Update on GIPA," (co-author) *RSHC Client Alert* (October 13, 2023)
"The State of Snap Removal in Illinois District Courts," (author) *Illinois State Bar Association's Trial Briefs Newsletter Section on Civil Practice & Procedure* (August 2023, vol. 70, no. 2)
"GIPA: The Next Front for Illinois Privacy Litigation?" (co-author) *Illinois State Bar Association's Bench & Bar Section Council Newsletter* (April 2023, vol. 53, no. 5)
"First-Generation Attorney Panel," (co-panelist) UIC First-Generation Law Student Association (FGLSA) General Body Zoom Meeting (October 5, 2022)

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Legal Aid Chicago, Ambassadors Board & Pro Bono Panel (2022)
Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, Associate Board (2022)
ACLU of Illinois Next Generation Society (2022)
Northwestern University Marching and Band Alumni Association
Executive Vice President (2021-2023)
President (2023-2025)