



Zachary M. Schmitz

Partner

Financial Markets Litigation and Enforcement

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Zachary Schmitz is a trusted advisor to financial institutions and proprietary trading firms, providing strategic counsel in high-stakes litigation, regulatory enforcement actions and internal investigations. With nearly a decade of experience navigating the evolving landscape of financial markets, Zach is particularly adept at matters involving futures, options, complex derivatives, the equities markets and digital assets.

Navigating the complexities of financial markets and regulatory scrutiny

Recognized for his sophisticated understanding of financial products and trading practices, Zach regularly represents clients in investigations and enforcement proceedings before financial regulators such as the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC), the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and self-regulatory organizations (SROs); and at stock, option and futures exchanges. He is frequently called upon to defend clients in enforcement proceedings and cross-border investigations and is known for offering pragmatic guidance and innovative solutions when confronted with litigation and regulatory scrutiny.

Zach has a distinguished track record in arbitration, particularly on behalf of broker-dealers and proprietary trading firms, where his advocacy has resulted in numerous favorable awards and settlements. In both litigation and arbitration, clients value his ability to distill complex issues, anticipate the tactics of opposing counsel and deliver results in high-pressure environments.

Representative Experience

- Defended broker-dealer in arbitration claiming unsuitable recommendations and unreasonable liquidation caused investor to lose over \$500 million. Won full defense award.
- Defended broker-dealer in arbitration claiming conflicts of interest caused investor lost over \$250 million. Won full defense award and costs.

Practices

- Financial Markets Litigation and Enforcement
- Litigation
- Cryptoassets and Blockchain Technology
- Futures and Derivatives
- Proprietary Trading Firms
- Quantitative and Algorithmic Trading

Industries

- Finance and Financial Markets

Education

- JD, The University of Chicago Law School
- BS, Missouri State University

Bar Admissions

- Illinois

Professional & Community Involvement

- The Chicago Bar Association, Futures and Derivatives Law Committee, Vice Chair

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- Defended proprietary trading firm in arbitration claiming wrongful termination based on alleged whistleblower reporting of unlawful trading. Won denial of all monetary claims.
- Trial counsel in related arbitrations arising from losses in options trading strategy. Won full defense awards or limited recoveries to less than 10 percent of claimants' collective investment losses.
- Defended broker-dealer in lawsuit alleging breach of contract before the Circuit Court of DuPage County, Illinois and the Illinois Appellate Court. Claims were dismissed with prejudice and full attorneys' fees awarded and affirmed on appeal.
- Represented digital asset prime broker in CFTC investigation regarding alleged unregistered conduct.
- Represented investment bank in SEC receivership arising out of a real-estate Ponzi scheme, obtaining a favorable recovery from the receivership and title insurance.
- Represented futures commission merchant in CFTC investigation regarding margin practices. The CFTC concluded the investigation without recommending charges.
- Represented digital asset proprietary trading firms in investigations conducted by the SEC, CFTC, DOJ and state regulators.
- Represented individuals and trading firms in various investigations by futures and options exchanges.

Recognitions

Recognized or listed in the following:

- *Best Lawyers in America*
 - Ones to Watch
 - Commercial Litigation, 2026

News

- Katten Announces New Partner Class of 2025 (August 26, 2025)
- Katten's Rising Leaders Named to 2026 *Best Lawyers: Ones to Watch*® List (August 21, 2025)
- Katten Legal Clinic Featured by PLI's 'Pursuing Justice' Podcast (November 3, 2023)
- Katten Honors Attorneys for Providing Pro Bono Services (October 30, 2023)

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Publications

- Financial Markets and Funds *Quick Take* | Issue 51 (June 2026)
- Financial Markets and Funds *Quick Take* | Issue 50 (May 2026)
- Financial Markets and Funds *Quick Take* | Issue 49 (April 2026)
- Financial Markets and Funds *Quick Take* | Issue 48 (March 2026)
- Financial Markets and Funds *Quick Take* | Issue 45 (December 2025)
- Reaching the Finish Line: The CFTC Concludes Its Enforcement Sprint by Offering Lower Fines for Self-Reporting and Cooperation (September 22, 2025)
- Financial Markets and Funds *Quick Take* | Issue 36 (March 2025)
- Clearer Skies Ahead: CFTC Enforcement Division's New Advisory Opens Doors for Self-Reporting and Increased Cooperation (March 7, 2025)
- Will History Repeat Itself? Peering Into the Past to Predict the Next Four Years of CFTC Enforcement Actions (January 28, 2025)

Presentations and Events

- CBA Futures & Derivatives Committee Annual Seminar (June 4, 2026)
- Futures and Derivatives Law Committee (June 6, 2025) | *Moderator* | *Charting the Future: Navigating CFTC Regulations in a Dynamic Market – SRO Enforcement*
- Futures and Derivatives Law Committee (June 5, 2025) | *Moderator* | *Confronting Change: Compliance During Uncertain Times – Surveying the Enforcement Horizon*
- Futures and Derivatives Law Committee (May 15, 2025) | *Moderator* | *Evolution of CFTC Enforcement since Dodd-Frank*
- Futures and Derivatives Law Committee (March 19, 2025) | *Moderator* | *Crisis Management*
- Futures and Derivatives Law Committee (November 17, 2021) | *Presenter* | *Digital Asset Topics in the News: Tether & Bitfinex Enforcement; CT Jury Finds Crypto Products Not to be Securities; Stablecoins & More*
- Market Correction Curriculum: Ponzi Schemes: Dealing With Regulatory and Litigation Risks Exposed by Market Downturns (June 2, 2020) | *Presenter*

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