

# Debra K. Lefler

**Partner**

Litigation

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**Partner Debra Lefler concentrates her litigation practice on complex commercial and real estate disputes. Her real estate litigation experience includes second-chairing a three week arbitration involving a development/partnership dispute; defending landlords and commercial lenders in property-related disputes; and foreclosures and collection proceedings. She also works on cases of breach of contract, consumer fraud and trade secret misappropriation, offering strategic counsel to empower her clients' critical business decisions.**

**Broad litigation experience including jury trials**

Practicing law for more than 10 years, Debra has broad litigation experience in federal and state courts at both the trial and appellate levels. She has researched, authored and argued various pleadings and motions. She has also conducted all phases of discovery, attended settlement conferences and mediations, and participated in jury and bench trials as well as arbitrations.

Debra's pro bono work has included representing state employees in a successful challenge to a discriminatory state law. She also advocated for a client facing deportation and represented elderly tenants in a housing dispute.

During law school, Debra served as a judicial extern for the Honorable Richard D. Cudahy, US Circuit Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit. She also served as executive editor of the Northwestern University Law Review and was a research assistant to Professor Lee Epstein.

Prior to joining Katten in 2018, Debra worked in Chicago as an associate at both a boutique law firm and a large international law firm.

## Representative Experience

- Represented insurance company in federal jury trial and subsequent appeal in dispute about coverage for multimillion-dollar claim under professional liability policy.*

## Practices

- Commercial Litigation
- Litigation

## Education

- JD, Northwestern University School of Law, *cum laude, Order of the Coif*
- MA, The University of Chicago
- BA, University of California, Santa Cruz, *Phi Beta Kappa*

## Bar Admissions

- Illinois

## Court Admissions

- US Court of Appeals, Seventh Circuit
- US District Court, Northern District of Illinois
- US District Court, Western District of Michigan

## Professional & Community Involvement

- Federal Bar Association
- First Defense Legal Aid, board member
- The Chicago Bar Association

- Represented insurer in billion-dollar lawsuit in Cook County (Illinois) Circuit Court alleging fraud and breach of contract against holders of credit insurance policies.*
- Represented marketing services corporation in federal district court suit against former employee for breach of employment contract, solicitation and trade secret misappropriation.*
- Represented insurer in arbitration dispute with reinsurer over aggregate stop-loss coverage.*
- Represented financial services provider charged with consumer fraud.*

*Experience prior to Katten

## Recognitions

*Recognized or listed in the following:*

- *Best Lawyers in America*
  - Ones to Watch
    - Communications Law, 2021–2025

## News

- Katten Attorneys Recognized as *Best Lawyers*® and *Best Lawyers: Ones to Watch*® Award Recipients (August 15, 2024)
- Katten Attorneys Distinguished by *Best Lawyers*® (August 17, 2023)
- Katten Promotes 10 Attorneys to Partner (August 15, 2023)
- Katten Attorneys Recognized by *Best Lawyers*® (August 18, 2022)
- Katten Attorneys Listed in *The Best Lawyers in America*® (August 19, 2021)
- Katten Attorneys Distinguished as Top Legal Talent in the 2021 *Best Lawyers in America* and *Best Lawyers: Ones to Watch* Lists (August 20, 2020)

## Publications

- 2021 Amendment to Illinois Supreme Court Rule 23 (November 2021)
- Force Majeure: A Practical Perspective for Commercial Relationships (April 13, 2020)

- Keeping Books on Romance: The Gift Exclusion in Nonmarital Relationships (2011)

## Presentations and Events

- The Realities of Virtual Litigation (January 27–February 17, 2021) | *Speaker* | *Remote Trial Practice*