

Margo Wolf O'Donnell

Co-Chair, Labor & Employment Practice Group; Co-Chair, Inclusion & Opportunity Committee

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Overview

Margo is a nationally recognized employment attorney with more than twenty-five years of experience litigating complex and "bet the company" employment claims. Margo's cases involve high stakes restrictive covenants and trade secrets, whistleblower claims, wage-and-hour issues, and statutory claims of harassment and discrimination. Margo also acts as a crisis manager and business advisor to her clients on best practices for workplace safety, compensation, leave issues, employment agreements, diversity and inclusion, individual and group discharges, and internal investigations. She has been widely recognized as one of the top employment attorneys in the country.

Margo serves as outside employment counsel for many clients nationwide. Clients praise Margo's ability to contribute to a "positive, productive and inclusive work environment for employees" and describe her advocacy as "persistent, smart, tough and innovative."

Margo is ranked in Chambers USA and is listed as a Labor & Employment Star in Benchmark Litigation. She has been selected for inclusion in The Best Lawyers in America and Illinois Super Lawyers. Crain's named Margo to its lists of the "Most Influential Women Lawyers in Chicago" and "Most Notable Women Executives." Best Lawyers named Margo as one of 15 "Women of Influence" in the legal profession nationwide. She holds an "AV Preeminent" Peer Rating by Martindale-Hubbell (the highest possible rating).

Margo has also devoted significant time to mentoring and supporting other attorneys. She currently co-chairs Benesch's Inclusion & Opportunity initiative. Margo is the founder of and currently leads B-Sharp, Benesch's professional development program for in-house attorneys, which has provided programming and networking opportunities to hundreds of in-house lawyers.

Margo is Past President and recipient of the Leadership Award of the Coalition of Women's Initiatives in Law. She is a Life Fellow of the American Bar Foundation and a Fellow of the Litigation Counsel of America. Margo serves on the Boards of the Coalition of Women's Initiatives in Law, the Yale Alumni Fund, the Yale Club of Chicago, the Women's Board of the University of Chicago, and the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools.

Margo's litigation experience ranges from the defense of one of the largest race discrimination class actions in history to two-party restrictive covenant disputes.

Client Testimonials

"Margo is a great lawyer and is very helpful. She knows her subject matter expertly." - Chambers USA

"Margo is terrific. She is very responsive and gives us what we need in a timely and efficient manner." - Chambers USA

Representative Matters

- Secured dismissal of Title VII claims in a discrimination lawsuit filed against The Andersons, Inc. and its affiliates in the U.S. District Court for the District of Kansas. After removing the case to federal court, the team moved to dismiss, arguing the plaintiff failed to state a viable gender-discrimination claim. The Court sustained the Motion to Dismiss, significantly narrowing the plaintiff's remaining claims.
- Secured a complete victory for Global Industrial in a lawsuit filed by a former sales manager in the U.S. District Court for New Jersey. The plaintiff alleged ADA and NJLAD violations and sought extensive damages. During discovery, Benesch uncovered misconduct that led to counterclaims for breach of contract and trade secret misappropriation. The case settled with the plaintiff dismissing all claims with prejudice and Global Industrial paying nothing. The company's General Counsel praised Benesch's "superb legal work," "careful strategy" and "relentless advocacy," calling the result "a first in company history."

Credentials

EDUCATION

- University of Michigan Law School, 1994, J.D.
- Yale University, 1990, B.A., *Magna Cum Laude*
  - Distinction in history

BAR & COURT ADMISSIONS

- Illinois
- U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, including Trial Bar
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit
- U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Arkansas
- U.S. District Court for the Central District of Illinois
- U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan

Memberships

- Fellow, American Bar Foundation
- Fellow, Litigation Counsel of America
- Board of Directors, University of Chicago Laboratory Schools
- Board of Directors, Woman's Athletic Club
- Women's Board, University of Chicago
- Board of Directors, Yale Club of Chicago
- Women's Advisory Board Member, *Chicago Lawyer* magazine
- Past President and National Board Member, Coalition of Women's Initiatives in Law
- Member, B-Sharp Professional Network for Women In-House Attorneys

Awards & Recognition

- Corporate Counsel's Women, Influence & Power in Law (WIPL) Lifetime Achievement Award, 2026
- Listed, *Chicago Lawyer Magazine,* Leading Illinois Women Lawyers, 2025
- Named, Thomson Reuters Stand-Out Lawyer, 2024-2026
- Listed, *Crain's Chicago* Notable Leaders in Employment & Labor Law, 2023
- Listed, The *National Law Journal's* 2023 Employment & Discrimination Law Trailblazer
- "2023 Top Lawyers Women Leaders," *Leading Lawyers*
- "2023 Top Lawyers HR-Related," *Leading Lawyers*
- Best Lawyers®, Commercial Litigation; Employment Law – Management, Lawyer of the Year, 2023, 2024
- Listed, Best Lawyers®, Employment Law, 2025-2027
- Listed, Illinois Super Lawyers, Employment Litigation, 2012-2026

- Listed, Illinois Super Lawyers, To 50 Women Attorneys in Illinois, 2013-2017, 2024-2026
- Listed, Chambers USA Leading Lawyers, Labor & Employment, 2021-2026
- Listed, *Crain's Chicago* Notable Women Executives over 50 List 2020
- Listed, *Crain's Chicago* Notable Women in Law, 2018 and 2020
- Listed, Benchmark Litigation, Labor & Employment Star, 2020-2024
- Martindale-Hubbell, "AV Preeminent" Peer Rating
- *Crain's Chicago*, 2017 "Most Influential Women Lawyers in Chicago"
- "Top 10 Women Employment Management Attorneys in Illinois," *Leading Lawyers*
- Listed, *The Best Lawyers in America©*, Commercial Litigation; Employment Law 2013-2023
- *Best Lawyers in America©*, recognized as a "Woman of Influence" in the legal profession
- *Chambers & Partners*, 2017 shortlist for "Inspiring Role Model Promoting Gender Diversity"
- Law Bulletin Publishing Company, recognized in its editions of "40 Under 40 Hall of Fame" and "Women Making an Impact"

News & Insights

- 126 Benesch Attorneys Recognized in 2027 Best Lawyers® Rankings
  August 20, 2026 | Press Releases
- Benesch Co-Chair Margo Wolf O'Donnell Quoted in Footwear News on Employment Law Challenges
  July 23, 2026 | Media Mentions
- Benesch Co-Chair Margo Wolf O'Donnell Quoted in Business Insurance on Expanding Workplace Heat Protections
  July 14, 2026 | Media Mentions
- Benesch Recognized as Leading Law Firm by Chambers USA 2026 with Record Growth in National and Regional Rankings
  June 4, 2026 | Press Releases
- Bloomberg Law Quotes Benesch Partner Margo Wolf O'Donnell on USDA Line Speed Proposal and Worker Safety Risks
  May 29, 2026 | Media Mentions
- Benesch Partner Margo Wolf O'Donnell Wins Corporate Counsel's Women, Influence & Power in Law 2026 Lifetime Achievement Award
  March 5, 2026 | Press Releases
- Margo Wolf O'Donnell Quoted in Bloomberg Law on AI-Generated Deepfakes and Emerging Workplace Liability Risks
  February 25, 2026 | Media Mentions

- Thomson Reuters Honors Eight Benesch Attorneys as 2026 "Stand-Out Lawyers"
  February 4, 2026 | Press Releases
- 16 Benesch Attorneys Selected to 2026 Illinois Super Lawyers and Rising Stars Lists
  January 27, 2026 | Press Releases
- Margo Wolf O'Donnell Quoted in Bloomberg Law on Compliance Risks of Flexible Work Compensation
  November 25, 2025 | Media Mentions

Speaking & Events

PAST EVENTS

- From Trusted Advisor to Strategic Business Partner: Establishing Executive Presence and Credibility | Margo Wolf O'Donnell
  September 14, 2026 | Speaking Engagement
- Turning Negotiations into Triumphs: Effectively Negotiating with Confidence to Deliver Powerful Outcomes | Margo Wolf O'Donnell
  October 6, 2025 - October 8, 2025 | Speaking Engagement
- Navigating Discrimination Claims and DEI Issues with the Current Presidential Administration | Margo Wolf O'Donnell
  June 17, 2025 | Firm Events
- Employment Law CLE: What to Expect in 2024 | Margarita S. Krncevic, Margo Wolf O'Donnell
  March 6, 2024 | Firm Events
- 2023 Trade Secrets and Restrictive Covenant Year in Review - What Happened and What is Likely to Happen
  January 31, 2024 | Firm Events