

Marisa T. Darden

Lead, White Collar, Government Investigations & Regulatory Compliance Practice

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Overview

Marisa Darden is a former state and federal prosecutor who assists clients across myriad industries, advising companies, executives, boards and individuals facing high-stakes civil, criminal and regulatory scrutiny. As lead of the White Collar, Government Investigations & Regulatory Practice, Marisa counsels clients in investigations and prosecutions brought by law enforcement and regulatory agencies, including matters involving financial crime, public corruption, corporate misconduct, regulated industries and high-profile issues at the intersection of business, sports, entertainment and the law. She has successfully tried more than 15 complex criminal cases to verdict and has argued before the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals.

Marisa has advised clients, litigated, and conducted internal investigations involving allegations of wrongdoing under federal and state law, including the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, bribery, corruption, the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act, wire and mail fraud, complex financial crimes, and other criminal and civil violations of law. She also regularly conducts corporate inquiries involving allegations of sexual harassment and workplace discrimination, civil rights and Title IX violations, and other corporate malfeasance. Her experience includes advising on enforcement risk, internal controls, government scrutiny and crisis-sensitive matters across business sectors, including sports, entertainment, technology, financial services and other regulated industries.

Marisa is frequently called on by national media to provide legal analysis on white collar enforcement, DOJ decision-making, FCPA uncertainty, financial fraud, public corruption, federal criminal procedure, online gambling and emerging regulatory issues. Her commentary has addressed criminal and civil matters involving public officials, athletes, coaches, franchise transactions, celebrity endorsements, sports betting, institutional investigations and high-profile federal prosecutions.

Marisa began her career as a litigator in New York. She was part of the team that liquidated the largest broker-dealer in U.S. history, which ultimately administered more than U.S. $100 billion in assets. Marisa clerked for the Honorable Morrison C. England in the Eastern District of California and worked as an Assistant District Attorney in the New York County (Manhattan) District Attorney's Office. She is also an adjunct faculty member at Case Western Reserve School of Law, lecturing on criminal law.

Representative Matters

- Represented a professional basketball player accused of conspiracy and wire fraud for allegedly attempting to avoid paying child support and taxes for several years. The government claimed that the pro athlete "unlawfully, voluntarily, intentionally and knowingly" conspired to defraud the U.S. by falsely underreporting his income and sought prison time for the athlete. Benesch defended the athlete, securing a probationary period and avoiding prison time for the client.
- Represented a consumer products company in an internal investigation regarding allegations of racial bias and a hostile work environment involving a human resources manager. Benesch reviewed all internal communications, interviewed company personnel and provided a detailed investigative report with factual findings and proposed remedial actions.
- Represented a member of the leadership team at a public Big 10 state university in a dispute involving allegations that the dean of the business school was improperly removed from his position after failing to mandatory report allegations of staff improper behavior, in violation of Title IX. The parties reached a settlement favorable to our client.
- As a Federal Prosecutor, prosecuted several individuals and group drug dealers as part of an opioid taskforce resulting in several landmark sentences.
- As a Federal Prosecutor, prosecuted the first case that challenged a non-U.S. resident with international drug trafficking in the Northern District of Ohio.
- Member of legal team that represented the largest broker-dealer liquidation in U.S. history.
- Represented pharmaceutical sales representative in large DOJ and HHS investigation into kickback scheme initiated by a Qui Tam relator.
- Represented the Board of Directors in one of the largest RICO investigations in U.S. history in the energy sector, resulting in a deferred prosecution agreement with the Government.

Credentials

EDUCATION

- Duke University School of Law, J.D.
- The London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), General Course, Sociology
- University of Michigan, B.A., Political Science

BAR & COURT ADMISSIONS

- Ohio
- New York
- Former Assistant United States Attorney, Northern District of Ohio
- Former Assistant District Attorney, New York County District Attorney's Office
- Law Clerk to the Honorable Morrison C. England, United States District Court, Eastern District of California

Memberships

- CLC Leadership Cleveland Class of 2026
- Executive Board, William K. Thomas Inn of Court
- Board of Directors, Federal Bar Association, Northern District of Ohio Chapter
- Board of Directors, Rainbow Babies & Children's Foundation
- Board of Directors, College Now
- Member, Duke Law Alumni Association Board of Directors
- Member, The Links, Incorporated

Awards & Recognitions

- Named, Mentor of the Year, Engage! Cleveland Generation NEXT Awards, 2026
- Finalist, Best Mentor Award, American Lawyer (ALM) Industry Awards, 2026
- Listed, *The Best Lawyers in America®*, Commercial Litigation, Criminal Defense: White-Collar, 2027
- Listed, Benchmark Litigation, Future Star, 2026-2027
- Listed, Chambers USA Leading Lawyers, Litigation: White Collar Crime & Government Investigations, 2025-2026

- Recipient, *Crain's Cleveland Business,* Notable Litigators and Trial Attorneys Award, 2025
- Recipient, *Crain's Cleveland Business,* Notable Black Leaders Award, 2024
- Recipient, *Crain's Cleveland Business,* Women of Note Award, 2022
- Selected by United States District Judge Dan A. Polster as his Honor's delegate to the Sixth Circuit Judicial Conference, May 2018
- Listed, Ohio Super Lawyers, Criminal Defense: White Collar, 2025-2026

Clerkships

- Law Clerk for the Honorable Morrison C. England, U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California

News & Insights

- Benesch Named 2027 Highly Recommended Firm by Benchmark Litigation; 14 Attorneys Recognized, Including 4 First-Time Honorees
  October 30, 2026 | Press Releases
- DOJ's National Fraud Enforcement Division Issues Corporate Enforcement Directive, Signaling Heightened Scrutiny of Corporate Fraud
  October 6, 2026 | Client Alerts & Insights
- Benesch White Collar Chair Marisa Darden Quoted in Law360 Article on DOJ's Expanded Focus on Fraud Enforcement
  October 2, 2026 | Media Mentions
- Benesch Partner Marisa Darden Interviewed by KNX News Radio on Federal Investigation into Los Angeles Clippers
  September 11, 2026 | Media Mentions
- Benesch Partner Marisa Darden Named Mentor of the Year by Engage! Cleveland
  September 2, 2026 | Press Releases
- Benesch's Marisa Darden Named Finalist for Best Mentor in The American Lawyer (ALM) Industry Awards
  August 28, 2026 | Press Releases
- Benesch Partner Marisa Darden Interviewed by 21 WFMJ on Arrest of 49ers Owner Jed York
  August 25, 2026 | Media Mentions
- Partner Marisa Darden Quoted in The Athletic on Case Involving 49ers Owner Jed York
  August 24, 2026 | Media Mentions
- 126 Benesch Attorneys Recognized in 2027 Best Lawyers® Rankings
  August 20, 2026 | Press Releases

- Marisa Darden Featured on Bloomberg Law Podcast Discussing Record-Breaking Los Angeles Lakers Sale
  August 13, 2026 | Media Mentions

Speaking & Events

PAST EVENTS

- Analyzing the FCPA Shift, Recent Case Updates and New Guidelines | Marisa T. Darden
  September 18, 2025 | Speaking Engagement
- Compliance, ERM, and IRM: Risk Management Trends in 2025 | Marisa T. Darden
  June 2, 2025 - June 3, 2025 | Speaking Engagement
- Signal-gate Unlocked: Striking the Balance Between Secure Communications and Legal Oversight in Government | Marisa T. Darden
  May 1, 2025 | Speaking Engagement
- Why Enterprises Simply Can’t Take CISA and the FBI’s Guidance at Face Value | Marisa T. Darden
  April 30, 2025 | Speaking Engagement
- Contracts Unleashed: Practical Approaches to Third-Party Risk Management in Contracting | Marisa T. Darden
  March 25, 2025 | Speaking Engagement