

Michael Vatis

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Overview

Michael represents companies and individuals in high-stakes litigation and enforcement actions. He is a deeply experienced appellate litigator with a track record of success in the U.S. Supreme Court, federal courts of appeal, and state appellate courts. He has also achieved positive results for clients on dispositive motions before federal and state trial courts and in enforcement actions by regulators, including the Federal Trade Commission and state attorneys general.

Michael also advises clients on compliance with US and international privacy and data security laws and regulations, data breach prevention and response, and compliance with government demands for information. He has been repeatedly cited by Chambers and Legal500 as a leading practitioner in the field and has been praised by clients as “a deep thinker [who] thoroughly analyzes issues, identifies solutions and is able to apply his analysis to business reality,” and as “a great counselor” who “is realistic in his advice, takes into account business demands and has a deep knowledge of privacy regulations and enforcement.”

Earlier in his career, Michael served eight years in the government with leading operational and policy roles in the areas of cybercrime, cybersecurity, counterterrorism, counterintelligence, and critical infrastructure protection. He was the founding head of the FBI’s computer crime and infrastructure protection program; Associate Deputy Attorney General for national security matters in the Department of Justice; and Special Counsel in the Office of General Counsel at the Department of Defense, where he received the Secretary of Defense Award for Excellence.

Michael also served as the first Director of the Institute for Security Technology Studies at Dartmouth; the founding Chairman of the Institute for Information Infrastructure Protection (I3P); and Executive Director of the Markle Task Force on National Security in the Information Age.

In addition, Michael has also been involved in numerous cybersecurity and national security advisory groups. He has been a Senior Fellow at New York University Law School's Center on Law and Security; a member of the National Academy of Science/National Research Council Committee on the Policy Consequences and Legal/Ethical Implications of Offensive Information Warfare; and a member of the Commission on Cybersecurity for the 44th Presidency.

At the beginning of his legal career, Michael had the unique privilege of clerking for two giants of American law, Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Thurgood Marshall.

**Matter completed prior to joining Benesch.*

Representative Matters

- Filed an amicus brief before the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts on behalf of the National Retail Federation and the Retailers Association of Massachusetts to provide the Court with insight into the foundational importance of web analytics and advertising technologies to the modern digital economy, and the implications of this case for retailers. The Court ultimately found for Defendants in the case, a great result for our clients, and the majority opinion notably cited our brief in discussing the ubiquity of web analytics and advertising technology on the Internet, and the role these technologies play in the ecommerce ecosystem.
- Wrote influential amicus briefs in Southern District of New York, Second Circuit, and Supreme Court concerning government's ability to use search warrant to obtain communications content stored abroad.*
- Represented retailers in class actions alleging violation of federal and state privacy, consumer protection, and wiretapping laws through use of common website software and features such as cookies, pixels, session replay, and chats.*
- Represented retailer in Ninth Circuit and Oregon Supreme Court in class action suit alleging deceptive pricing practices.*
- Successfully represented numerous university students in college disciplinary proceedings and appeals, including under Title IX.*
- Obtained asylum for young immigrant from Democratic Republic of Congo who was the victim of severe abuse and persecution in DRC as a result of her family's political activities.*
- Represented insurance company in half-billion dollar coverage litigation concerning whether art works were damaged in house fire.*
- Represented union's pension and benefit plans in appeals arising from bankruptcy of one of nation's largest coal mining operations.

Credentials

EDUCATION

- Harvard Law School, J.D., *magna cum laude*
  - Sears Prize Winner
- Princeton University, A.B., *magna cum laude*
  - Phi Beta Kappa

BAR & COURT ADMISSIONS

- New York
- District of Columbia
- Supreme Court of the United States
- U.S. Court of Appeals, District of Columbia
- U.S. Court of Appeals, First Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals, Second Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals, Fourth Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals, Fifth Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals, Sixth Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals, Seventh Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals, Ninth Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals, Tenth Circuit
- U.S. District Court, District of Columbia
- U.S. District Court, Southern District of New York
- U.S. District Court, Northern District of Illinois

Memberships

- Member, American Law Institute

Awards & Recognition

- Legal 500, City Elite, Cybersecurity and Data Protection, 2026
- Named, Thomson Reuters Stand-Out Lawyer, 2025-2026
- Ranked Band 5 Globally for Privacy & Data Security, Chambers 2024
- Ranked Band 5 Nationally for Privacy & Data Security, Chambers 2023

- *Legal 500 US*, Leading Lawyer, Media, Technology & Telecoms: Cyber Law, Including Data Protection and Privacy (2018-2022)
- *Legal 500 US*, Media, Technology & Telecoms: Cyber Law, Including Data Protection and Privacy (2017, 2019-2020)
- *Legal 500 US*, Telecoms & Broadcast: Regulatory; and Telecoms & Broadcast: Transactional (2017)
- *Cybersecurity Docket*, Named to “Incident Response 30” (2016)
- *National Law Journal*, “Trailblazers in Cybersecurity” (2015)
- *Chambers Global*, Privacy & Data Security, US (2010-2014, 2019-2021)
- *Chambers USA,* Privacy & Data Security, Nationwide (2008-2013, 2018-2022)

Clerkships

- Law Clerk for the Honorable Ruth Bader Ginsburg, U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit
- Law Clerk for the Honorable Thurgood Marshall, Supreme Court of the United States

News & Insights

- Word on the Street: State AGs Set Their Sights on Data Centers and Affordable Housing
  June 15, 2026 | Client Alerts & Insights
- Benesch Partner Michael Vatis Interviews with NewsNation on U.S.-Iran Conflict and the Strait of Hormuz
  May 16, 2026 | Media Mentions
- Michael Vatis Interviews with NewsNation on Chinese Cyber Threats and U.S. Cyber Defense Vulnerabilities
  April 17, 2026 | Media Mentions
- Cybersecurity Dive Quotes Benesch Partner Michael Vatis on DOJ's Cyber Enforcement
  March 20, 2026 | Media Mentions
- Michael Vatis Interviews with NewsNation on Cybersecurity Risks to U.S. Critical Infrastructure
  March 16, 2026 | Media Mentions
- Michael Vatis Speaks With NewsNation on Iranian-Linked Cyberattack Targeting Stryker
  March 12, 2026 | Media Mentions
- Thomson Reuters Honors Eight Benesch Attorneys as 2026 "Stand-Out Lawyers"
  February 4, 2026 | Press Releases
- Michael Vatis Quoted in Bloomberg Law on EU’s AI and Privacy Rule Revamp Creating Compliance Uncertainty
  December 3, 2025 | Media Mentions

- Thomson Reuters Honors 13 Benesch Attorneys as 2025 “Stand-Out Lawyers”
  March 4, 2025 | Press Releases
- Partner Michael Vatis Quoted in Bloomberg Law | "Corporate Bar Hails Massachusetts Court’s Reading of Wiretap Law"
  November 1, 2024 | Media Mentions

Speaking & Events

PAST EVENTS

- Election 2024: The threat of Foreign Interference | Michael Vatis
  September 24, 2024 | Speaking Engagement
- International Law: The United States and the Changing World Order | Michael A. Vatis
  October 28, 2023 | Speaking Engagement