

Nicole E. Wrigley

Vice Chair, Litigation Practice

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Overview

Nicole is a nationally recognized complex commercial litigator, selected by Chambers USA, with over two decades of experience defending and pursuing high-stakes disputes that shape legal precedent. As a sought-after advocate in "bet-the-company" litigation, she combines deep strategic thinking with practical execution to deliver exceptional results in the most contentious cases.

Currently, she serves as lead counsel for Smartmatic in a $2+ billion defamation suit against Fox News. Her representation of Smartmatic against other defendants, such as Newsmax and OANN, has secured successful settlements for the company, as well as a recent summary judgment ruling in favor of the company against Mike Lindell and MyPillow.

Nicole has litigated some of the largest and most high-profile cases in U.S. legal history-from landmark defamation disputes and multibillion-dollar securities fraud claims to serving on the trial team in one of the largest auditor liability cases ever tried. Her practice spans the full litigation spectrum, including intimate business disputes, nine-figure commercial battles, and complex MDL proceedings where she served as liaison counsel defending industry-leading companies.

While Nicole's approach traditionally emphasizes strategic defense, she brings unmatched versatility to both sides of the courtroom. Her clients-ranging from emerging technology companies to Fortune 100 corporations-rely on her ability to navigate years-long contentious battles with strategic precision. She adapts seamlessly from pre-trial maneuvering to courtroom warfare across multiple jurisdictions while delivering practical, value-driven solutions.

Creative Advocacy and Client Relationship Excellence: Nicole's approach centers on delivering value while maintaining the flexibility essential in high-stakes, evolving disputes. Her natural ability to connect with clients, judges, witnesses, and juries sets her apart-building trust when collaborating and commanding respect when fighting. Opposing counsel have recognized her "great presence in front of a jury," while clients praise Nicole as "a creative and aggressive, but practical advocate" with "an outstanding work ethic." Her deft touch in managing client relationships and stakeholder dynamics has earned strong recognition:

"Nicole is very responsive. She is attuned to what we need and is really able to support us in the way we are looking for." -Benesch client, Chambers USA

"Nicole is a strong commercial lawyer." -Benesch client, Chambers USA

Diverse Subject Matter Mastery: Nicole's litigation portfolio encompasses class action defense, trade secret misappropriation, corporate investigations, defamation and disparagement, contract disputes, securities fraud, consumer fraud, and product liability. Beyond the courtroom, Fortune 500 clients seek out Nicole's counsel for crisis management, reputational risk, and media relations during their most critical moments. She regularly advises companies on pre-litigation strategies. Her ability to quickly master new industries and legal frameworks-particularly in technology-driven disputes-allows her to jump into any matter with confidence and immediately add value.

Industry Recognition: Nicole's exceptional work has earned recognition from the legal community. She has been recognized as a Benchmark Litigation Star (2026), selected by Chambers USA for General Commercial Litigation (2024-2026), and included on the Legal 500 City Elite: Commercial Disputes list. Crain's Chicago has honored her as a Notable Women in Law (2024) and Notable Litigators and Trial Attorneys (2023, 2025). She was recognized by Chicago Magazine as a Rising Star for nine consecutive years (2010-2018). Previously, Benchmark Litigation selected her for its exclusive "Under 40 Hot List" for Commercial Litigation (2017).

Nicole is regularly sought out by individuals and Fortune 500 counsel as a national authority on crisis management and First Amendment/defamation law, frequently speaking at leading industry conferences including her presentation on "Justice in the Age of Disinformation: Leveraging Legal Strategies to Safeguard Elections" at the National Association of Women Lawyers (NAWL) in July 2024.

Community Commitment and Pro Bono Excellence: Nicole is deeply committed to giving back to her community through extensive pro bono work and civic leadership. Her robust pro bono practice spans representation of prisoners in the Illinois Department of Corrections system, advocacy for the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, and representation of Chicago public school teachers. In 2005, she received the Outstanding Pro Bono Commitment Award from Intercultural Montessori Language School. Currently, Nicole serves as an advisor to the Future Justice Lawyers of Chicago, mentoring the next generation of legal advocates. Her community leadership extends beyond legal work, as she previously served on the Associate Board for the American Cancer Society and as a director for Seven Generations Ahead, a sustainability organization.

Representative Matters include:

- Representing a global election technology company in a defamation suit seeking over $2 billion against Fox News and others.
- Represented a global energy company in defending against an over $100 million trade secret misappropriation claim, securing dismissal on summary judgment.
- Represented a Fortune 100 telecommunications company in defending against a multi-million dollar trade secret misappropriation claim, resulting in a favorable settlement.
- Represented a Fortune 500 food company's espresso/coffee products business in a dispute with an international postal/e-commerce provider over its insolvent U.S. subsidiary supplier, resulting in a favorable settlement.
- Represented a beef producer in "pink slime" defamation case against ABC News, securing settlement after four weeks of trial testimony that was characterized by the press and industry leaders as vindicating the producer.
- Served as lead counsel for a medical device company in product liability actions, obtaining multiple dismissals and favorable settlements for the company before discovery.
- Represented a manufacturer in securities fraud litigation seeking over $2 billion in damages, securing summary judgment with a precedent-setting decision that was affirmed by the 11th Circuit.
- Represented a "Big Four" accounting firm in auditor liability litigation seeking over $3 billion in damages. Secured a directed verdict in favor of the accounting firm following 103 days of trial testimony and argument.

Representative Matters

- Achieved a significant summary judgment decision for election technology company Smartmatic in its defamation case against MyPillow and Mike Lindell. The Court found Lindell's accusations were false and defamatory per se and that MyPillow was vicariously liable for their publication. The ruling also found injunctive relief was appropriate pursuant to the Minnesota Deceptive Trade Practices Act. The case will be proceeding to trial in Minnesota Federal Court in 2026.
- Represented a biofuel industry leader with respect to a false and defamatory article published by a major media organization and secured full retraction of the article within two weeks of publication.

Credentials

EDUCATION

- University of Illinois College of Law, 2002, J.D., *magna cum laude*
  - with honors
  - Editor, *University of Illinois Law Review*
- University of Illinois, 1999, B.S., *magna cum laude*, Psychology and Political Science

BAR & COURT ADMISSIONS

- Illinois
- New York
- U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, including Trial Bar
- U.S. District Court for the Central District of Illinois
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit

Memberships

- B-Sharp Professional Network for Women In-House Attorneys

Awards & Recognition

- Listed, Lawdragon's "500 Leading Litigators in America," 2027
- Listed, Chambers USA Band 3, General Commercial Litigation, 2026
- Listed, Benchmark Litigation, Litigation Star, 2026-2027
- Named, *Crain's Chicago* Notable Litigators and Trial Attorneys, 2025
- Listed, Legal 500 City Elite: Commercial Disputes list, 2025, 2026
- Listed, *Chambers USA Leading Lawyers*, Litigation: General Commercial, 2024, 2025
- Listed, *Crain's Chicago* Notable Women in Law, 2024
- Listed, *Crain's Chicago* Notable Litigators and Trial Attorneys, 2023
- Named, *Chicago Magazine* Rising Star, 2010-2018
- Named, Under 40 Hot List, Benchmark Litigation, 2017
- Recipient, Outstanding Pro Bono Commitment Award, Intercultural Montessori Language School, 2005

News & Insights

- Benesch Named 2027 Highly Recommended Firm by Benchmark Litigation; 14 Attorneys Recognized, Including 4 First-Time Honorees
  October 30, 2026 | Press Releases
- Benesch Partner Nicole Wrigley Named to 2027 Lawdragon 500 Leading Litigators in America
  September 30, 2026 | Press Releases
- Defamation Dispatch: Q2 2026
  August 18, 2026 | Newsletters
- 16 Benesch Attorneys Recognized in 2026 Legal 500 City Elite Rankings
  July 28, 2026 | Press Releases
- Benesch Recognized as Leading Law Firm by Chambers USA 2026 with Record Growth in National and Regional Rankings
  June 4, 2026 | Press Releases
- The Headline Problem in Defamation Law: A Proposal for Fixing Illinois' and Ohio's Outdated Innocent Construction Rule
  April 3, 2026 | Client Alerts & Insights
- Benesch Named 2026 Highly Recommended Firm by Benchmark Litigation; 10 Attorneys Recognized, Including Three First-Time Honorees
  October 29, 2025 | Press Releases
- Law360 Highlights Benesch's Major Defamation Win for Smartmatic Against MyPillow CEO
  September 30, 2025 | Media Mentions
- Benesch Recognized in Chambers USA 2025 with Record Growth in National and Regional Rankings
  June 4, 2025 | Press Releases
- Benesch Partners Erik Connolly and Nicole Wrigley Honored as Crain's Chicago 2025 Notable Litigators and Trial Attorneys
  April 21, 2025 | Press Releases

Speaking & Events

PAST EVENTS

- Justice in the Age of Disinformation: Leveraging Legal Strategies to Safeguard Elections | Nicole E. Wrigley
  July 24, 2024 - July 25, 2024 | Speaking Engagement
- AI Litigation and Legislation: New Trends and Practical Takeaways | Nicole E. Wrigley, Maura T. Levine-Patton
  March 19, 2024 | Firm Events

- What I Wished I Had Known: Transitioning from a Law Firm to In-House | Nicole E. Wrigley
  March 2, 2022 | Firm Events
- Business Collaboration and the Risk of Trade Secret Litigation
  March 4, 2021 | Speaking Engagement
- A Media Report Slammed Your Product--Should You Sue?
  October 20, 2020 | Speaking Engagement