

Thomas O. Crist

Lead, Construction Practice

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Overview

Tom Crist leads Benesch's Construction practice and specializes in intervention on and completion of projects that encounter problems and obstacles, including claims and disputes. He also helps clients avoid those circumstances.

Tom is an international arbitration and disputes specialist headquartered in the United States and the UAE. He has spent most of his career as a trusted advisor, problem solver, and advocacy partner at an Am Law 200 firm. Tom leads Benesch's Construction Practice and is founder and Chairman of the firm's Global Infrastructure Team, MENA (Middle East/North Africa), and Federal Contracting Practices. The overlapping groups share an emphasis on innovation and delivery of essential services to established and developing locales, including those in the energy, chemical, natural resources, transportation, healthcare, manufacturing, and infrastructure sectors.

Tom advises stakeholders and public and closely held company leadership in their planning and execution of a broad range of major projects and initiatives. He lends leadership on site to projects that encounter implementation and technical challenges and which often utilize dynamic controls such as BIM, AI, robotic and autonomous systems, proprietary analytics, and other tools that are on the leading edge in the AEC space. Tom is additive to client teams and assists in spotting issues and managing risk. He helps jumpstart or "fix and finish" projects while preserving claims, defenses, and profit margins. Tom motivates people and leads teams to solutions.

Many client projects are of daunting size and scope and include civil/infrastructure, manufacturing, water/wastewater, solar, tunnels, ports, roads and bridges, fossil fuel, renewable energy, transmission and distribution, high-tech, aerospace, chemical, precision agriculture, mining, pharma, modular and complex mechanical systems, and lesser-tested technologies.

Client Testimonials

“Tom has great practical business knowledge, with an attentive, visionary, and forward-looking approach.” - Benesch client, Chambers USA

Representative Matters

- Represented Clarendon Capital in its acquisition of O’Donnell Metal Deck & Bar Joist (OMD), a leading value-added distributor of metal decking, steel bar joists, and related structural products serving the commercial construction industry.
- Represented an ENR-ranked Midwest specialty contractor in a cross-border dispute over cost overruns and withheld payments on a steel manufacturing plant. The contractor significantly underbid the project due to misleading actions by the owner. Benesch re-baselined the schedule, developed a damage model and used an estoppel argument to secure a favorable settlement in fast-track arbitration.
- Represented a U.S. company specializing in design-build delivery of RNG digester facilities.
- Advised major North American energy company concerning formation of special purpose entities focusing on development of Small Modular Nuclear Reactors, hydrogen and ammonia technology.
- Representation of one of the largest global suppliers of solar technology in North American on claims against it exceeding $250 million in liquidated damages caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic.
- Representation of joint venture partner regarding a financing default and construction delays regarding a nuclear power facility in the Middle East.
- Representation of a utility regarding termination and replacement of its EPC contractor on a coal fired power facility in Europe.
- Representation of a Fortune 50 global control system manufacturer in $60 Million in disputes driven by technology and operational failures in one of Canada’s largest hydroelectric power facilities.

Credentials

EDUCATION

- The Ohio State University, B.A., *cum laude*, Sociology and Political Science
- Capital University Law School, J.D.
  - Order of the Curia
  - Accelerated Graduate

- London School of Economics and Political Science
  - Lifelong Learner
  - Emphasis of Business, International Relations, Political Economy
    - First Class Honours
- University of Cambridge Institute for Sustainable Leadership (CISL)
  - Emphasis on Global Supply Chain Management - Continuing Education
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology
  - Emphasis on Clean Energy Technology and Solutions

BAR & COURT ADMISSIONS

- Fellow, Chartered Institute of Arbitrators (FCIArb); Board Member, North American Chapter; Co-Chair, Pennsylvania/Ohio Chapter
- CIArb, Peer Review Panel Member (UK)
- Adjunct Law Professor (International Arbitration); Case Western Reserve University School of Law
- American Arbitration Association (AAA); Roster of Neutrals
- Arbitrator, Dubai International Arbitration Centre (DIAC)
- Qualified Arbitrator, Canada (QArb.)
- Arbitrator, Saudi Center for Commercial Arbitration (SCCA)
- Arbitrator, British Virgin Islands International Arbitration Centre (BVI IAC); Commercial and Construction Panels
- Registered Legal Consultant (United Arab Emirates)
- Ohio
- Texas
- North Carolina
- New York
- District of Columbia
- U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Ohio
- U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Ohio
- U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan
- U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Indiana
- U.S. District Court for the District of Nebraska
- U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Texas
- U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas

- U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Texas
- U.S. District Court for the Western District of Texas
- U.S. District Court for the Middle District of North Carolina
- U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina
- U.S. District Court for the Western District of North Carolina
- U.S. District Court for the Northern District of New York
- U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York
- U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York
- U.S. District Court for the Western District of New York
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia
- U.S. District Court for the D.C. Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit
- U.S. Court of Federal Claims
- U.S. Supreme Court
- U.S. Court of International Trade

Memberships

- Member, NYSBA International Outreach Committee; Dispute Avoidance Committee
- Chair, NYSBA Construction Subcommittee
- Member, The Toronto Commercial Arbitrator Society (TCAS)
- American Bar Association, Member, Forum on the Construction Industry; ADR Committee
- Construction Managers Association of America (CMAA); Legal Affairs Committee
- Society of Construction Law (SCL); North American Founding Member; Great Lakes Regional Director

Awards & Recognition

- Listed, Chambers USA Leading Lawyers; Construction Law, 2006-2026

- Listed, *The Best Lawyers in America®,* Construction Law; Litigation – Construction, 2012-2027
  - Named, “Lawyer of the Year,” 2022
- Listed, Ohio Super Lawyers, Construction Litigation, 2015-2026
- AV (preeminent) Rated, Martindale-Hubbell Peer Review

News & Insights

- 126 Benesch Attorneys Recognized in 2027 Best Lawyers® Rankings
  August 20, 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
- Law360 Highlights Benesch Team Representing Industrial Power Systems in Kraft Heinz Dispute
  February 18, 2026 | Media Mentions
- 48 Benesch Attorneys Selected to 2026 Ohio Super Lawyers and Rising Stars
  January 27, 2026 | Press Releases
- My Benesch My Team - Richard
  December 18, 2025 | My Benesch My Team: Client Feature Ads
- 129 Benesch Attorneys Recognized in 2026 Best Lawyers® Rankings
  August 21, 2025 | Press Releases
- Tom Crist Quoted in Law360 | "US Could Soon Find Itself on Wrong End of Energy Disputes"
  January 31, 2025 | Media Mentions
- 49 Benesch Attorneys Selected to 2025 Ohio Super Lawyers and Rising Stars
  December 17, 2024 | Press Releases
- Risks and Opportunities for the Construction Industry During the Transition to Next-Generation Energy
  November 7, 2024 | Contributed Content & Presentations
- 132 Benesch Attorneys Recognized in 2025 Best Lawyers® Rankings
  August 14, 2024 | Press Releases

Speaking & Events

PAST EVENTS

- Unlocking Opportunity - The Future of Infrastructure in M&A | Thomas O. Crist
  February 26, 2026 | Speaking Engagement
- ABA Forum on the Construction Industry
  May 21, 2025 | Speaking Engagement

- Venture and Private Equity Trends: Investing in Early Stage AEC Innovators
  April 9, 2025 | Speaking Engagement
- Risks and Opportunities for the Construction Industry Towards Net-Zero by 2050 | Thomas O. Crist
  February 22, 2024 | Speaking Engagement
- Tracing the Global Construction Claim | Thomas O. Crist
  July 15, 2023 - July 17, 2023 | Speaking Engagement