

Paul J. Watford

PARTNER

Litigation
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FOCUS AREAS

Board and Internal
Investigations

Commercial Litigation

Corporate Governance
Litigation

Litigation

Strategic Risk and Crisis
Management

Supreme Court and
Appellate

Trial

EXPERIENCE

Paul Watford is a partner in the Los Angeles office of Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati, where he is a member of the firm's litigation department and its national Supreme Court and appellate practice.

Prior to joining the firm, Paul served as a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit for 11 years. During his tenure on the court, he decided more than 2,000 appeals and drafted more than 600 dispositions. His published opinions addressed numerous areas of federal and state law, including arbitration, bankruptcy, class actions, constitutional, copyright, environmental, immigration, labor and employment, securities, and tax. In one of Paul's more notable rulings, he authored the Ninth Circuit's *en banc* decision in *City of Los Angeles v. Patel* (2013), a case in which the court struck down, 7-4, a Los Angeles city ordinance authorizing police to conduct surprise inspections of hotel and motel guest registries without obtaining the owners' consent or a search warrant. The following year, the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed the Ninth Circuit's decision invalidating the ordinance in a 5-4 vote.

After graduating from law school in 1994, Paul served as a law clerk to the Honorable Alex Kozinski of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. The following year, from 1995 to 1996, he served as a law clerk to the Honorable Ruth Bader Ginsburg of the U.S. Supreme Court.

After joining Munger, Tolles & Olson LLP as an associate in 1996, Paul became an Assistant United States Attorney in the Central District of California in 1997. Serving in the Criminal Division, he prosecuted a wide range of federal criminal cases, including complex white-collar criminal cases as a member of the Major Frauds Section. While serving in the U.S. Attorney's Office, Paul tried seven cases to verdict before a jury. He joined Sidley Austin LLP in Los Angeles as an associate in 2000, returned to Munger, Tolles & Olson LLP the following year, and became a partner in 2003. During this time, Paul's practice focused on appellate litigation in state and federal courts on a wide range of legal issues, including administrative, antitrust, consumer class action, state and federal constitutional, and securities law issues.

From 2007 to 2009, Paul was a lecturer in law at the University of Southern California's Gould School of Law, teaching an upper-level course in judicial opinion writing.

CREDENTIALS

Education

- J.D., UCLA School of Law, 1994
Order of the Coif; Editor, UCLA Law Review
- B.A., University of California, Berkeley, 1989

Associations and Memberships

- Member, Board of Trustees, Norton Simon Museum of Art, 2019-present
- Member, Judicial Conference Advisory Committee on Appellate Rules, 2019-2023
- Inaugural Distinguished Jurist in Residence, Southwestern Law School, 2022-2023

- Lecturer in Law, University of Southern California, Gould School of Law, 2007-2009
- Board Member, Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County, 2007-2012
- Member, American Bar Association (ABA) Amicus Curiae Committee, 2007-2010
- Co-chair, ABA Litigation Section's Appellate Practice Committee, 2005-2008

Admissions

- State Bar of California

INSIGHTS

Select Publications

- Co-author, "Crafting Precedent," 131(2) *Harvard Law Review* 543-580, 2017 (Book review of *The Law of Judicial Precedent* by Bryan A. Garner et al., 2016)
- "Screws v. United States and the Birth of Federal Civil Rights Enforcement," 98(1) *Marquette Law Review* 465-486, 2014
- "Contractual Liability in Intellectual Property Disputes—A Case Study: *Buchwald v. Paramount Pictures Corp.*," 18(3-4) *Columbia-VLA Journal of Law & the Arts* 269-290, 1993

Select Speaking Engagements

- Presenter, "Where is this Story Going?: Trends in Copyright Litigation in the Ninth Circuit," USC Gould School of Law 2024 Intellectual Property Institute, March 19, 2024