

John Pearce

PARTNER

Litigation
Salt Lake City

jpearce@wsgr.com
801-907-6468

FOCUS AREAS

Commercial Litigation
Litigation
Supreme Court and
Appellate

EXPERIENCE

John Pearce is a partner in the Salt Lake City office of Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati, where his practice focuses on complex commercial litigation, appellate advocacy, and strategic counseling for clients facing high-stakes disputes.

John rejoined the firm in 2026 after more than 16 years of public service in senior roles across Utah's judicial and executive branches. A highly respected jurist, he spent a decade as a Justice on the Utah Supreme Court—including more than three years as Associate Chief Justice—and two years as a judge on the Utah Court of Appeals. During his judicial tenure, John authored more than 150 majority opinions spanning constitutional, administrative, commercial, and criminal law and earned a reputation for rigorous analysis, principled decision-making, and engaging opinions.

With an impact that extends beyond his written decisions, John has been recognized for his innovative efforts. Devoted to expanding access to justice, John chaired the Juvenile Indigent Representation Committee whose recommendations led to legislation improving public representation of juvenile defendants. As an advocate for reforming bar admission, John spearheaded the Utah Supreme Court's Bar Admissions Working Group which culminated in Utah adopting an alternate path to bar licensure.

Before joining the bench, John served as general counsel to Utah Governor Gary R. Herbert, advising the Governor and his staff on legal strategy and policy, and overseeing the Governor's legislative agenda. One of the highlights of his time in the Governor's Office was negotiating the agreement with the U.S. Department of the Interior that kept Utah's National Parks open during the 2013 federal government shutdown.

John began his legal career as a securities litigation associate in Wilson Sonsini's Palo Alto office. In 1999, he joined Jones Waldo in Utah, where he became partner and served on the firm's board of directors and executive management committee. At Jones Waldo, John handled a wide variety of matters for a diverse roster of clients, including litigating shareholder disputes, trade secret cases, employment actions, election contests, and First Amendment challenges.

In addition, John serves as an adjunct professor at the S.J. Quinney College of Law at the University of Utah, where he has taught courses on legislative process, statutory interpretation, and negotiation.

A popular and sought-after speaker, John is frequently asked to present on a spectrum of topics, including legal ethics, legal writing, the history of the Utah Constitution, and Utah's judicial selection process. *The Salt Lake Tribune* editorial board has called John a "a true defender of Utah's constitution" and *Above the Law* has described him as "notably quite funny."

John has received numerous awards, including the Utah Minority Bar Association's Jimi Mitsunaga Excellence in the Law Award and the University of Utah School of Law's Honorary Alumnus of the

Year. In 2024, *The Salt Lake Tribune* named John and his Utah Supreme Court colleagues the Utahns of the Year.

CREDENTIALS

Education

- J.D., UC Berkeley School of Law, 1996
- B.S., University of Utah, 1992
Magna Cum Laude, Phi Beta Kappa

Associations and Memberships

- Former Chair, Utah Supreme Court's Bar Admissions Working Group
- Former Chair, Juvenile Indigent Representation Working Group
- Former Member, Utah Judicial Council's Public Outreach Committee
- Former Chair, Utah Judicial Council's Technology Committee
- Former Board Member, *Guardian ad Litem* Oversight Committee
- Former Member, Governor's Government Records Access and Management Act Working Group
- Former Member, Salt Lake County Bar Executive Committee

Honors

- Honored with the Jimi Mitsunaga Excellence in the Law Award by Utah Minority Bar Association
- Named Honorary Alumnus of the Year by University of Utah S.J. Quinney College of Law
- Received the Adjunct Faculty Service Award from University of Utah S.J. Quinney College of Law
- Named among the 2024 Utahns of the Year by *The Salt Lake Tribune*

Admissions

- State Bar of California
- State Bar of Utah