

HURRELL CANTRALL



Colleen O'Brien

Partner

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Education

- University of Pittsburgh School of Law, J.D., 1995, Order of the Barristers
- University of Pittsburgh, B.A, 1992, *magna cum laude*

Admissions

- California
- Pennsylvania
- United States District Court, Central District of California
- United States District Court, Eastern District of California
- United States District Court, Northern District of California
- United States Court of Appeals, Ninth Circuit

Colleen O'Brien focuses her practice on toxic torts, catastrophic injury and complex employment matters. A former military prosecutor, she has served as lead counsel in bench and jury trials in state and federal courts throughout the United States. She has taken on high-profile roles in many complex litigation matters involving long-term occupational injury, infectious disease, property damage, and groundwater contamination.

In her practice, Ms. O'Brien regularly examines medical and technical experts to prepare them for deposition and trial testimony, and her attention to detail and comprehensive understanding of all aspects of her cases often result in early settlement and summary disposition for her clients.

In May 2012, Ms. O'Brien was featured in California Lawyer magazine for her work on a pro bono case in which she secured indefinite asylum for an LGBT individual from India.

Ms. O'Brien has a deep breadth of experience with all aspects of civil litigation, having served on trial teams in bench and jury trials in state and federal courts. Both as a government lawyer in the criminal context and as a private practitioner in civil courts, she has successfully tried matters to verdict for her clients. Much of her current practice involves product liability cases in which a former worker claims to have developed a disease through occupational exposures to hydrocarbon solvents and other workplace chemicals. She is also experienced in defending wrongful termination and discrimination claims on behalf of corporate clients.

Ms. O'Brien served in the United States Coast Guard at Alameda, California from October 1997 – July 2002, working as Procurement Attorney-Advisor (April 2001 – July 2002); Environmental Attorney and Claims & Litigation Attorney (October 1997 – October 1999); and Prosecutor (April 1998 – April 2001). She evaluated

millions of dollars of affirmative and defensive claims for liability, litigation risk, valuation and referral to the Department of Justice.

Ms. O'Brien received her Bachelor of Arts, magna cum laude from the University of Pittsburgh in 1992, and her Juris Doctorate from University of Pittsburgh School of Law in 1995. She has been a member of the Order of the Barristers, Appellate Moot Court Board, National Moot Court Team, and was awarded the Appellate Competition Award.

Ms. O'Brien is admitted to practice before all California state courts, the United States District Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, all Pennsylvania State Courts and the United States District Court, Northern and Eastern Districts of California.

In her spare time, Ms. O'Brien volunteers with the Los Angeles Public Library's Adult Literacy and Veterans' Assistance Programs.

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Representative Matters:

- Tried over 30 federal and state jury and bench trials, in most cases, as lead.
- Served as a Coast Guard JAG officer and Boarding Team Member, 1997-2002.
- Served as an enlisted Army reserve radio operator, 1990-1997.
- Obtained pleadings-stage dismissal of fraudulent concealment and negligence claims on behalf refinery client based on workers' compensation exclusivity.
- Obtained summary adjudication of negligence and products liability claims involving former gasoline tanker truck driver based on statute of limitations defense.
- Dismissal at the pleadings stage of a 16-plaintiff fear of cancer case involving alleged exposures to hexavalent chromium
- Obtained a plaintiffs' verdict in a two-week jury trial involving libel and infliction of emotional distress.
- Won appeal of anti-SLAPP motion in case involving limited public figures.
- Awarded Certificate of Commendation from the U.S. Department of Justice for "outstanding performance and invaluable assistance" during the criminal investigation and prosecution of a major San Francisco Bay oil spill case, resulting in federal, corporate and individual convictions as well as a \$9.4 million settlement.
- Obtained indefinite asylum for Guatemalan victim of gang violence at contested immigration court hearing and following appeal.
- Obtained indefinite asylum for LGBTQ Indian national.
- Obtained U-Visa for Mexican-born domestic violence victim.
- Obtained T-Visa for Ethiopian-born human trafficking victim.