



Jeffrey S. Portnoy

PARTNER

Jeff is a partner practicing in the area of litigation. He previously served as Chair of the firm's Litigation Department, and has practiced law as a civil litigator at the firm since 1972.

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Overview

Jeff is a partner practicing in the area of litigation. He previously served as Chair of the firm's Litigation Department, and has practiced law as a civil litigator at the firm since 1972.

Jeff has 50 years of extensive litigation and alternative dispute resolution experience in several areas of substantive law, including insurance, employment, mass tort, product liability, media, securities, and medical and legal professional errors and omissions.

Jeff currently serves as Board Chair for the Ninth Circuit Historical Society. He was President of the Hawaii State Bar Association (HSBA) in 2007. He is also a past President of the Hawai'i Chapter of the Federal Bar Association, and he served two three year terms as a Hawai'i lawyer representative to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. He was elected to serve as a HSBA representative to the State Judicial Selection Commission.

He was Chairman of the United States District Court Advisory (Biden) Committee. He also served as a Hawai'i State Per Diem Judge and as an Adjunct Professor at the University of Hawai'i. He is President of the Hawai'i ABOTA chapter. Jeff has also served as the Hawai'i State Representative to the Defense Research Institute as well as the HSBA's representative to the ABA's House of Delegates. He also served a five year term from 2014 to 2019 on the University of Hawai'i Board of Regents.

He has been named *Best Lawyers*® Lawyer of the Year for Legal Malpractice Law – Defendants (2016), Bet-the-Company Litigation (2013), and Insurance Law (2011). He has been recognized by Best Lawyers in America in several practice areas, including Commercial Litigation, Litigation – First Amendment, Insurance Law, Legal Malpractice Law – Defendants, Personal Injury Litigation – Defendants, Litigation – Labor and Employment, and Bet-the-Company Litigation for over 25 years. Jeff is listed in Who's Who in America, and has been the recipient of several local and national awards, including the Society of Professional Journalists' First Amendment Award, and the Exceptional Performance Award from the Defense Research Institute. Among other state and national recognitions, he has been selected several times as one of the leading litigators in Hawai'i by *Chambers & Partners USA* and several other publications. In 2016, he was recognized as the top Civil Litigation Lawyer by Hawai'i *Super Lawyers* List.

Practices & Industries

Educational Institutions

Employment Law & Labor Relations

First Amendment, Advertising, Media & Entertainment

Health Care

Insurance Coverage & Defense

Intellectual Property

Litigation

- Alternative Dispute Resolution
- Commercial Disputes

Professional Liability

Technology

In his spare time, he served as President of Manoa Valley Theatre's Board of Directors for 25 years and was the color analyst for University of Hawai'i basketball for almost three decades. Jeff has served as a visiting Professor of Law at the Debrecen School of Law, Debrecen, Hungary, in Tartu, Estonia, and in Warsaw, Poland. He also served on the Board of Mothers Against Drunk Driving and the Hawai'i Chapter of the American Cancer Society.

Noteworthy

Awards

- *Pacific Business News* "Most Admired Leaders," 2023
- Listed in *Chambers & Partners*, USA Guide, since 2003
- Listed in *Best Lawyers*® for over 25 years, since 1993
 - Commercial Litigation
 - Litigation – First Amendment
 - Insurance Law
 - Legal Malpractice Law- Defendants
 - Personal Injury Litigation- Defendants
 - Litigation – Labor and Employment
 - Bet-the-Company Litigation
- *Martindale-Hubbell* AV Preeminent® Peer Review Rated, since 1984
- *Martindale-Hubbell* AV Preeminent® Rating Judicial Edition, for four decades
- *Who's Who in America*
- *Who's Who Legal*: USA, Commercial Litigation since 2006
- *Who's Who Legal*: Management Labour & Employment, 2021
- *Benchmark Litigation*: Local Litigation Star, since 2013
- American Society of Legal Advocates – Top 100 Litigation Lawyers
- *Best Lawyers*® Lawyer of the Year for 2016 – Legal Malpractice Law-Defendants
- *Best Lawyers*® Lawyer of the Year for 2013 – Bet-The-Company Litigation
- *Best Lawyers*® Lawyer of the Year for 2011 – Insurance Law
- Selected by Mayor Peter Carlisle to serve on City & County of Honolulu Ethics Commission
- Selected by Governor Neil Abercrombie (2011-2017) to serve on Judicial Selection Commission
- Listed in *Super Lawyers*® since 2008
- State Leadership Award, Defense Research Institute, 1999
Society of Professional Journalists, First Amendment Award, 1995
- Exceptional Performance Award, Defense Research Institute, 1991 and 1993
- Elected to Membership, International Association of Defense Counsel, 1991
- Freedom of the Press Award, Society of Professional Journalists Hawai'i Chapter, 1983

Credentials

Education

- J.D. (1972), Duke University School of Law
- B.A. (1969), Syracuse University

Memberships

- American Board of Trial Advocates, Hawai'i Chapter President (2024-Present)
- City and County of Honolulu Civil Service Commission (2024-Present)
- Ninth Circuit Historical Society, Board Chair (July 2024-Present)
- Hawai'i Representative to ABA House of Delegates (1994-1996), Member, Bench Bar Conference
- American Bar Association, Member, ABA Forum Committee on Communications; Former Vice Chair, Media, Privacy and Defamation Law, ABA Tort & Insurance Practice
- Hawai'i Defense Lawyers Association, Past President
- Defense Research Institute, Past Hawai'i Chair; awarded their Ambassador Award
- United States District Court Advisory Committee, Past Chairman
- Two three-year terms as Lawyer Representative to the Ninth Circuit
- Former Hawai'i Representative to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals Advisory Board
- Elected to American Board of Trial Advocates
- United States District Court Magistrate Selection Panel, Chairman (1990)
- Board of Directors of the Manoa Valley Theatre, President
- Board of Directors of the Hawai'i International Film Festival, Former President
- Honolulu Neighborhood Commission, Former Chairman
- University of Hawai'i Basketball color analyst on ESPN 1420
- University of Hawai'i, Department of Journalism/Media Law, Adjunct Professor (1985-1992)
- Hawai'i Supreme Court Disciplinary Board, Director
- Media Defense Resource Council, Member
- The Hawai'i Labor Letter, Former Editor-in-Chief
- University of Hawai'i Law School Dean Search Committee
- University of Hawai'i Board of Regents (2014-2019)
- William S. Richardson School of Law, Adjunct Professor – Constitutional Law (advanced) (2016-2018)
- American Cancer Society, Hawai'i Chapter, Director

Publications

- "Shielding Journalistic Protections and First Amendment Rights in Hawai'i," *ke kumu* (Summer 2025) (Author)

- “Are There Limits on Free Speech?” *What’s the Law KHON2* Podcast (August 8, 2022) (Interviewee)
- “Advocating for Freedom of Information in Hawai‘i’s Education,” *ke kumu* (Spring/Summer 2021) (Co-Author)
- “How Legal are Lockdowns, Testing, and Tracking,” *ke kumu* (Fall/Winter 2020) (Author)
- “Column: Legislature Should Let Public See Police Misconduct Records,” *Honolulu Star Advertiser* (June 15, 2020) (Co-Author)
- “Fighting to Stay Together,” *ke kumu* (Winter 2016) (Co-Author)
- “The Most Interesting Man in Honolulu,” *Midweek* (February 24, 2015) (Featured in Cover Story)
- “To Attack or Not to Attack,” *Communications Lawyer, The Journal of Media, Information, and Communications Law*, Vol. 26, No. 3, 23-24 (July 2009) (Author)
- “Mass Communication Law in Hawaii,” *New Forums Press, Inc.* (1994) (Co-Author)
- “Hawai‘i Chapter,” *Libel Defense Resource Center 50 State Survey*, Media Privacy and Related Law (1982 – present)
- “Manual on Access to Government – Hawai‘i Chapter,” *Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press*
- “The Lum Court and the First Amendment,” *Western Newspaper Publishing Co.*, University of Hawai‘i Law Review, Vol. 14, No. 1, 393-420
- Speaker, teacher, and author at numerous programs and seminars on media law, employment law, personal injury law, trial tactics, and commercial litigation.

Speaking Engagements

- “You’ve Been Sued! Keep Calm and Follow These Tips,” 20th Annual Labor & Employment Law Advanced Practices Symposium (March 2024) (Panelist with Charles High)