Tucker Ellis LLP



Chelsea Mikula

Partner

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Chelsea Mikula is Co-Chair of the Tucker Ellis Business Litigation Group.

Chelsea is an experienced trial lawyer defending clients nationwide in all aspects of commercial litigation. As a general commercial litigator, she has taken several cases to verdict at trial and in arbitration as co-counsel. She often is brought onto large trial teams to assist with witness preparation and overall trial strategy.

Chelsea defends clients in complicated breach of contract actions and other business-related torts with a particular emphasis on shareholder disputes and cases involving business valuation issues. She also represents several franchises, including a hospitality company, in nationwide litigation involving allegations of sex trafficking. Chelsea's passion for truly getting to know clients allows her to better understand their businesses and help them solve problems quickly and efficiently.

Complementing her business litigation work and skills as a trial lawyer, Chelsea represents corporations and employee stock ownership plan (ESOP) trustees in litigation across the country.

At the start of her career, Chelsea spent a number of years focused on consumer product safety issues. Today she uses that knowledge to advise clients on compliance, reporting obligations, and recall effectiveness and in advertising disputes before the National Advertising Division of the Better Business Bureau and the National Advertising Review Board.

Chelsea is ranked in Chambers USA in the area of Litigation: General Commercial (Ohio), where she is described by one client as "very knowledgeable and responsive. She has helped me through some very tricky issues and has been a trusted partner to bounce ideas off of and to collaboratively develop an approach for all complex issues."

A native Clevelander, Chelsea enjoys being active in the Northeast Ohio community and volunteering with organizations to do what she can to give back. She also enjoys mentoring young associates and helping them build their careers as lawyers.

Education

- Cleveland State University College of Law (J.D., cum laude, 2010); National Moot Court Quarter Semi-Finalist
- Denison University (B.A., 2007); Student Body President

State Admissions

- Ohio, 2010
- California, 2013

Federal Admissions

- United States District Court, Northern District of Ohio
- United States District Court, Southern District of Ohio
- United States Bankruptcy Court, Central District of California
- United States Bankruptcy Court, Southern District of California
- United States District Court, Central District of California
- United States District Court, Northern District of California
- United States District Court, Southern District of California
- United States District Court, Eastern District of Michigan
- United States Court of Appeals, Sixth Circuit
- United States Court of Appeals, Ninth Circuit
- United States District Court, Eastern District of California

Service Areas

- Business Litigation
- Consumer Product Safety
- ESOP
- ERISA Litigation
- Employee Benefits & Executive Compensation
- Commercial Asset Recovery & Protection
- Educational Institutions
- Arbitration & International Disputes
- Regulatory Issues
- Hospitality

Experience

- Served as lead trial counsel in two cases alleging RICO, negligence, and TVPRA claims against a hotel brand and operator that were successfully resolved immediately prior to trial
- Obtained summary judgment in two matters-of-first-impression cases alleging violations of the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act
- Served as second-chair trial counsel in a breach of fiduciary duty trial in federal court in Virginia, representing a transactional trustee
- As first-chair trial counsel in a bench trial in Baltimore City, Maryland, obtained a verdict substantially less than the settlement demand
- Served as first-chair trial counsel in a breach of contract jury trial in Columbiana County, Ohio
- Served as second-chair trial counsel in a breach of contract jury trial in federal court in San Francisco, California
- Obtained favorable results in representing several businesses and individuals in business valuation disputes, with an emphasis on determining the fair market value of shares
- Represents companies, trustees, and advisors in ESOP litigation
- Serves as special counsel to advise companies, trustees, and advisors on fiduciary duties and obligations under ERISA
- Represents several large institutional trustees in complicated ESOP litigation, including disputes over the fair market value of the shares or litigation as a result of a distressed ESOP company
- Represented a manufacturer in a product liability case in AAA arbitration and obtained a favorable verdict
- Obtained a positive resolution in representing a local cooperative in a large commercial litigation
- Represented product manufacturers in regulatory matters before the Consumer Product Safety Commission
- Represents clients in advertising disputes before the National Advertising Division of the Better Business Business Bureau, as well as the appellate arm, the National Advertising Review Board
- Advises several clients on recall strategy and effectiveness
- Routinely advises clients on compliance programs and risk mitigation plans
- Represented small and large commercial clients in breach of contract and product liability actions in state and federal courts and obtained favorable results
- Represented several local companies in non-compete and trade secret violation cases
- Defended a Fortune 500 company in a large contract and fraud dispute

Publications & Events

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

- "DOL Investigations – Lessons Learned," The ESOP Association's National Conference 2026, Washington, D.C. (May 2026)
- "Beyond the Headlines: Practical Strategies to Prevent and Respond to Labor Trafficking Risk in Light of Recent Litigation," Tucker Ellis 2025 In-House Counsel Summit, Cleveland, Ohio (October 2025)
- "Proactive Strategies for Franchisors to Prevent Litigation Risk," International Franchise Association (IFA) 2025 Legal Symposium, Washington, D.C. (May 2025)
- "Rights & Responsibilities of an Employee Owner," The ESOP Association's Ohio/Kentucky Chapter 2025 Spring Conference, Westerville, Ohio (March 2025)
- "Empathy Against the Egregious: Navigating Sex Abuse and Other Psychologically Traumatic Injuries Using a Trauma-Informed and Empathetic Approach in Litigation," DRI's 2025 Women in the Law Seminar, San Antonio, Texas (February 2025)
- "Legal and Regulatory Update," The ESOP Association's Ohio/Kentucky Chapter 2023 Thoroughbred Conference, Lexington, Kentucky (July 2023)
- "When the Worst Happens: Managing Financial Distress & Bankruptcy," TEA National Conference 2023, Washington, D.C. (May 2023)
- "Recent DOL Trends," 2022 Great Lakes Regional Conference, The ESOP Association, Sandusky, Ohio (October 2022)
- "Fiduciary Review of Your ESOP Valuation," The ESOP Association's TEA National Conference 2022, Washington, D.C. (May 2022)
- "Legal and Regulatory Update" and "ESOP Valuations and Recent Trends," Great Lakes ESOP Conference 2021, The ESOP Association, Sandusky, Ohio (September 2021)
- "ESOP Case Studies – The Good, the Bad and the Ugly," Exit Planning Institute (August 2021)
- "Legal and Regulatory Update for ESOPs," 35th Annual Ohio Employee Ownership Conference, The Ohio Employee Ownership Center (May 2021)
- "Recent Updates in Trial Practice," Business Law Section Spring Meeting 2021, American Bar Association (April 2021)
- "ESOPs Beyond 2020," Tucker Ellis Webinar (November 2020)
- "Hot Topics in Employee Benefits," 2020 In-House Counsel Summit Webinar, Tucker Ellis LLP (November 2020)
- "Ethics and Finance: A Lawyer's Perspective," Financial Statement Analysis for Attorneys, NBI Webinar (October 2020)
- "ESOP Legal and Regulatory Update," 34th Annual Ohio Employee Ownership Conference (August 2020)
- "Annual Review: Key Business Law Developments in Bite-size Pieces," ABA Business Law Section, "To the Extent That…" Podcast Series (July 2020)
- "Projection Issues Raised in ESOP Litigation," Webinar, Business Valuation Resources (May 2020)
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"Trends in ESOP Litigation by the Department of Labor and Private Plaintiffs," NCEO Employee Ownership Conference (April 2020)

- "Hot Legal & Regulatory Issues for ESOPs," 5th Annual Great Lakes Regional ESOP Conference, Sandusky, Ohio (October 2019)
- "Lay Witness Examinations – Overview, Demonstration, and Q&A," 2019 Litigation Institute: Anatomy of a Jury Trial – Part 1, Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association, Cleveland, Ohio (May 2019)
- "ESOP Litigation Trends," NCEO Employee Ownership Conference, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (April 2019)
- "Recent Updates in Trial Practice," ABA Business Law Section Spring Meeting 2019, Vancouver, British Columbia (March 2019)
- "Hot Topics in ESOPs," Ohio/Kentucky Chapter of The ESOP Association's Annual Spring Conference, Powell, Ohio (March 2019)
- "The Anatomy, Choices, and Litigation Landmines of ESOPs," The Gathering 2019, San Diego, California (February 2019)
- "ESOP Litigation Trends," 4th Annual Great Lakes Regional ESOP Conference, Sandusky, Ohio (October 2018)
- "Corporate Compliance in View of Recent Trends in the DOJ, FTC, and CPSC Enforcement Authority," 2016 In-House Counsel Summit, Tucker Ellis LLP, Cleveland, Ohio (October 2016)
- "Mastering the Art and Science of Making It Rain," Leadership in Law: It's Never Too Early to Lead, Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association (January 2016)
- "Social Postings: Juror Ethical Issues," Ohio Professional Conduct Seminar, Tucker Ellis LLP, Cleveland, Ohio (December 2014)
- "Consumer Product Safety Regulations Around the World," Eaton Corporation, Beachwood, Ohio (November 2014)
- "International Compliance and Regulations: Insights Into Varying Requirements Among U.S. Trading Partners," 2013 Advanced Product Safety Management Course, John Cook School of Business, Center for Supply Chain Management, Saint Louis University (September 2013)
- "Yoga and the First Amendment: Does Yoga Promote Religion?", Moderator, Case Western Reserve University School of Law (April 2013)
- "Reporting Best Practices Along the Supply Chain and Around the World," ICPHSO (February 2013)
- "What You Should Know to Navigate through the New Worldwide Web of Consumer Product Safety" (November 2011)
- "The Publicly Available Consumer Product Safety Information Database," Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association (February 2011)

PUBLICATIONS

- "Trial Practice Guide," *Recent Developments in Business & Corporate Litigation*, American Bar Association (2018–2025)
- "Understanding Labor Trafficking Laws as Litigation Surges," Reuters, *Westlaw Today* (August

2025)
- "Proactive Strategies for Franchisors to Prevent Litigation Risk," White Paper, International Franchise Association (2025)
- "5 Ways to Champion Women Lawyers," *Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Journal* (April 2023)
- Reviews and revisions to Chapter 39, "Valuations for Employee Stock Ownership Plans" and Chapter 40, "ESOP Court Cases," *Valuing a Business: The Analysis and Appraisal of Closely Held Companies*, Sixth Edition, Shannon P. Pratt and ASA Educational Foundation (2022)
- "Summary of Financial Projections Issues in Recent ESOP Litigation," *INSIGHTS: ESOP Litigation Thought Leadership* (Autumn 2019)
- "Unsatisfying Answers in 4th Circ. Retirement Plan Ruling," *Law360* (March 2019)
- "True Blue: Avoid 'Fake News' on Product Packaging," *Manufacturing Today* (October 2018)
- "Consumer Product Safety Information Database Five Years Later: Trends in Complaints, Recalls, and Litigation," DRI's *The Voice* (April 2016)
- "Women's Affinity Groups: Beneficial Forums or Danger Zones?", *Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Journal* (April 2014)
- "Yoga and the First Amendment: Does Yoga Promote Religion?", *The Federal Lawyer* (August 2013)
- "Recall in Aisle 5! The Importance of Retailers' Compliance with Consumer Product Safety Regulations," *Chain Store Age* (December 2012)
- "International Consumer Product Safety Regulations," *ACC Docket* (June 2012)
- "A New 'World Wide Web' – The Sticky Implications of Consumer Product Safety Regulations in Canada, Australia, the EU, and Japan," Tucker Ellis Client Alert (June 2011)
- "Manufacturers Beware: The CPSC Approves the First Public Database for Consumer Complaints," Tucker Ellis Client Alert (December 2010)

MEDIA
- "To the Future: Cleveland Leadership Center Names 58 Members of the Cleveland Bridge Builders Class of 2021," *Crain's Cleveland Business* (June 2020)
- "Spotlight On: Chelsea Mikula," Cady Reporting Services, Inc. (May 2019)
- "Wilmington Fine Points to Lack of ESOP Guidance, Attorneys Say," *Bloomberg Law* (March 2019)
- "Legal Tech's Predictions for 2019 in Innovative Technologies," *LegalTech News* (December 2018)

Honors

- Chambers USA
  - » Litigation: General Commercial (Ohio) (2022–2026)
  - » “Up and Coming” in Litigation: General Commercial (Ohio) (2017, 2018)
  - » “Associates to Watch” in Litigation: General Commercial (Ohio) (2016)
- Legal 500 US Elite (Ohio Commercial Disputes) (2025, 2026)
- The Lawdragon 500 Leading Litigators in America (2027)
- *Crain’s Cleveland Business*
  - » Notable Women in Law (2026)
- Best Lawyers®: Ones to Watch (2021–2023)
- Ohio Super Lawyers Rising Stars® (2016–2020)

In the Community

- Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association
- Cleveland Leadership Center
  - » Cleveland Bridge Builders Class of 2021
- International Consumer Product Health and Safety Organization (ICPHSO)
- Ohio Employee Ownership Center
- The ESOP Association
  - » Advisory Committee on Fiduciary Issues (2023)
- Leadership Council on Legal Diversity
  - » Fellows Program (2023)
- Greater Cleveland Partnership, GCP LEAD Program (2019)
- John Hay Mock Trial Program
- Notre Dame Cathedral Latin Alumni Association
- The Littlest Heroes, Board of Directors, Chair
- Legal Aid Society of Cleveland, Time Well Spent Honor Society