

Cullen Drescher Speckhart

Partner



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Cullen is chair of Cooley's business restructuring practice and a top advocate in corporate restructuring and financial litigation. She has a diverse practice spanning a range of industries, including private equity, healthcare, life sciences, technology, energy and retail. Cullen regularly represents debtors, creditors' committees, trustees and foreign representatives in significant bankruptcy matters throughout the US. She is recognized for her strong courtroom advocacy, dealmaking ability and tactical skill. Cullen is noted by Chambers USA as an "extremely powerful presence" and "a very zealous, persistent and creative advocate." She is also highly regarded for her proactive, forward-focused approach to solvency strategy and for providing tactical guidance to Cooley business clients – including public, private and high-growth companies – in all aspects of contingency planning, risk mitigation and business portfolio improvement.

Having led some of the largest and most significant restructuring engagements in a multitude of jurisdictions, Cullen has deep experience in complex insolvency litigation. Her recent practice experience includes serving as lead restructuring counsel to official creditor constituencies in Avon (AIO US), Whittaker, Clark & Daniels, Mallinckrodt, LTL Management (Johnson & Johnson), Endo International, Le Tote, 24 Hour Fitness and White Stallion Energy. Cullen also acts as lead restructuring counsel to companies seeking to reorganize in and out of court and provides business risk management and strategic advice to entities across industries such as technology, life sciences, cyber services and cryptocurrency. Her company-side practice involves representing public and private debtors in Chapter 11 cases, often confronting complex emerging legal issues and matters of public importance. Cullen's current work on behalf of companies in bankruptcy includes representing Ascena Retail Group (Ann Taylor, Loft, Lane Bryant), as well as serving as lead restructuring counsel to Enjoy Technology, NS8, PhaseBio Pharmaceuticals, Quanergy Systems and Lucira Health in Chapter 11 proceedings.

Cullen has led numerous engagements in the energy sector, representing clients in various roles – including In re Foresight Energy LP; In re Alpha Natural Resources Inc.; In re Arch Coal Inc.; In re Patriot Coal Corporation; In re James River Coal Company; In re Armstrong Energy Inc.; In re Cloud Peak Energy Inc.; In re Westmoreland Coal Company; In re Cambrian Holding Company; In re Blackjewel LLC; and In re Peabody Energy Corporation. Cullen's other noteworthy engagements include In re Toys R Us Inc., in which she served as co-counsel to the official committee of unsecured creditors; In re Circuit City Stores Inc., in which she served as co-counsel to the debtors; In re White Birch Paper Company and Bear Island Paper Company, in which she served as counsel to the Canadian monitor; In re Workflow Management Inc.; In re USA Discounters Ltd.; In re Eastman Kodak Company; In re

Noranda Aluminum Inc.; In re Health Diagnostic Laboratory Inc.; In re The Gymboree Corporation; and In re Windstream Holdings Inc.

Cullen is a sought-after speaker, presenting to national audiences on a variety of legal considerations, including those surrounding corporate insolvencies, restructuring in life sciences and technology, career and professional development, advocacy, and leadership. In 2015, she co-authored the American Bankruptcy Institute (ABI) manual on Chapter 15 of the Bankruptcy Code. In 2017, ABI featured Cullen on its inaugural 40 Under 40 list recognizing bankruptcy, insolvency and restructuring professionals from around the world. In 2021, on account of exemplary practice performance and leadership, she was named Restructuring Lawyer of the Year at the Global M&A Network's 13th Annual Turnaround Atlas Awards. In 2023, Cullen was named to The Deal's Top Women in Dealmaking List for Restructuring and was also recognized by Turnarounds & Workouts as one of the 15 Outstanding Restructuring Lawyers of 2023. She is ranked by Chambers USA in Bankruptcy/Restructuring and was recognized in 2025 by Best Lawyers in Bankruptcy and Creditor Debtor Rights / Insolvency and Reorganization Law.

Cullen served the firm as partner in charge of its Washington, DC, office before transitioning to New York residency in 2025.

Cullen's career, practice and leadership experiences have been covered by numerous national media outlets. As part of her work on issues related to diversity, equity and inclusion and women's initiatives, Cullen led a team in designing and delivering a bespoke leadership training program for Cooley professionals seeking development in confidence, public speaking and personal branding.

Before entering private practice, Cullen clerked for then-Chief Judge Stephen C. St. John of the US Bankruptcy Court for the Eastern District of Virginia. During law school, she was the first prize winner of the ABI's inaugural Bankruptcy Law Student Writing Competition and the first law student ever to receive the Thatcher Prize for Excellence, an award presented annually to a William & Mary graduate student of outstanding scholarship, leadership, service and character.

Education

William & Mary Law School JD

Georgetown University BA, Politics and Economics

Admissions & Credentials

District of Columbia

New York

Missouri

Virginia

Court Admissions

US Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit

US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia

US District Court for the Southern District of New York

US District Court for the Southern District of Texas

US Bankruptcy Court for the Eastern District of Missouri

US Bankruptcy Court for the Eastern District of Virginia

Rankings & Accolades

Chambers USA: Bankruptcy/Restructuring – District of Columbia (2025 – 2026)

The Legal 500 US: Restructuring (Including Bankruptcy) (2025)

Best Lawyers: Bankruptcy and Creditor Debtor Rights / Insolvency and Reorganization Law (2025)

Recognized by Turnarounds & Workouts as one of the 15 Outstanding Restructuring Lawyers of 2023

Named to The Deal's Top Women in Dealmaking 2023 List for Restructuring

American Bankruptcy Institute, 40 Under 40

Restructuring Lawyer of the Year, Global M&A Network's 13th Annual Turnaround Atlas Awards