Cooley

Michael Attanasio

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San Diego

Trials
Commercial Litigation
White Collar Defense and Investigations
International Arbitration
Securities Litigation + Enforcement
Sports+
Antitrust and Competition
Supreme Court and Appellate

With more than 30 years of first-chair trial experience, Mike represents Fortune 500 companies and executives in high-stakes commercial litigation, white collar investigations, and enforcement matters. He also conducts internal investigations and advises Boards of Directors on strategic responses to litigation and regulatory risk. Over the course of his career, Mike has represented some of the most prominent companies in the world, including Google, Qualcomm, Sony, Illumina, and UnitedHealthcare, as well as individuals under investigation for securities fraud, insider trading, and price-fixing.

A fellow in the American College of Trial Lawyers and a former federal prosecutor, Mike is ranked Band 1 by Chambers for Commercial Litigation. In 2026 he was recognized by the Daily Journal among its Leading Commercial Litigators in California and by Legal 500 among its Leading Trial Lawyers. He has been named one of the Top 250 lawyers in America by Forbes, one of the Top 100 Lawyers in California by the Daily Journal, a "Game Changer" by The Recorder, and a “White Collar MVP” by Law360.

In addition to serving as a strategic adviser to several longtime clients, Mike has led teams in jury trials in state courts throughout California and in federal courts in New York, Washington, D.C., Texas, Ohio, Kentucky, and California. Frequently brought into high-stakes trials shortly before they are scheduled to begin, Mike is nationally recognized for his prowess in jury selection, cross-examination, and closing argument. He has deftly cross-examined senior executives, law enforcement agents, and expert witnesses in fields ranging from accounting and complex technology to DNA identification.

In one of the defining moments of his career, Mike served as lead counsel for Jenner & Block in its challenge to a retaliatory Executive Order issued by the President. The Executive Order sought to revoke security clearances, forbid access to federal buildings, and restrict the firm’s work with federal contractors. In less than a week, Mike led a Cooley team that filed suit to enjoin the Executive Order. His widely praised arguments secured first a temporary restraining order and then summary judgment. The litigation against the Executive Orders targeting the legal industry was hailed for its success in defending the profession and the rule of law.

In another high-profile case, Mike was co-trial counsel for baseball legend Roger Clemens in the obstruction of Congress and perjury prosecution brought against Clemens by the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Columbia. After a nine-week trial, the jury returned not guilty verdicts on all six counts. Mike’s cross-examination of prosecution witness Andy Pettitte, a former teammate of Clemens, was called a key turning point in the trial by several

observers. Throughout the trial and in his closing argument, Mike also took the lead in debunking DNA evidence that prosecutors claimed linked Clemens to the use of performance-enhancing drugs.

Beyond his courtroom advocacy, Mike serves on Cooley's Board of Directors and its Compensation Committee. From 2013 to 2024, Mike was global chair of Cooley's Litigation Department, overseeing a period of unprecedented expansion, courtroom success, and economic growth. Mike's strategic vision for the department included its expansion into new geographies and practice areas, as well as the addition of dozens of lateral partners from the most prominent United States Attorney's Offices, federal agencies, and competing firms. During this period, the department cemented its reputation as the go-to firm for disruptors and innovative companies, culminating with its recognition by The American Lawyer as "the modern marvel" and "trusted partner of the new economy."

For nearly a decade before he joined Cooley, Mike was a federal prosecutor in Washington, D.C., for the Public Integrity Section of the United States Department of Justice. He received the Department's most prestigious trial honor, the John Marshall Award for Trial of Litigation, along with several other commendations from federal law enforcement agencies.

Mike currently serves as the Chair of the Standing Committee on Attorney Discipline for the Southern District of California, a position to which he was appointed by the District Court. He is a Board Member for the San Diego Volunteer Lawyer Program, the oldest and most comprehensive pro bono legal services program in San Diego County. Mike previously served as an Adjunct Professor at the University of San Diego School of Law, teaching a popular course on white collar and corporate crime. He speaks and publishes frequently about trial practice and white collar criminal issues, and he is routinely named among the best in his fields of practice by various publications.

Mike graduated from Stanford Law School in 1990 and thereafter served as a law clerk to Judge Rudi M. Brewster of the US District Court for the Southern District of California. He received his BA from Princeton University, where he captained the Men's Division I Soccer Team.

Some of Mike's notable representations are listed here:

- A publicly traded life sciences company in a securities class action in which plaintiffs allege that the company misrepresented aspects of the company's attempt to secure FDA approval for a breakthrough drug.
- A global technology company in a class action in which plaintiffs alleged that the company's operating system improperly utilized class members' cellular data allowances.
- A global technology company in a class action in which plaintiffs alleged that the operation of certain privacy features violated the California Comprehensive Computer Data Access and Fraud Act in addition to common law claims.
- A publicly traded financial services and insurance company in litigation and investigations related to a massive Ponzi scheme perpetrated by a high-profile San Diego entrepreneur.
- A leading California cardroom casino in a landmark lawsuit brought by several Native American Tribes under a law passed by the California legislature for the express purpose of challenging the casinos.
- A global technology company in multiple cases alleging theft of trade secrets by departing executives and engineers.
- A national commercial real estate brokerage and its principal in civil litigation and related investigations involving the City of San Diego's acquisition of two commercial properties.
- A government contractor in antitrust litigation in which a competitor alleged bid-rigging and other violations.
- A leading global logistics company in an investigation over its employment of foreign nationals and wage practices.
- A publicly traded financial services company in litigation over allegedly improper disclosures made in an SEC filing.

- A global consumer electronics company in commercial litigation with a vendor asserting fraud and breach of contract claims.
- A nutritional supplement company in litigation against its leading competitor over competing claims for breach of contract and trade secret theft.
- A leading consumer goods company in an arbitration involving breach of contract claims brought by a vendor and charitable foundation.
- A Pentagon contractor in investigations and whistleblower litigation involving claims of improper accounting and government billing.
- A San Diego-based credit union in trade secrets litigation against a leading competitor.
- A Major League Baseball franchise in connection with an investigation conducted by the Commissioner and an outside law firm.
- A leading professional sports union in an arbitration seeking suspension of a high-profile player and other investigations.
- A leading spirits manufacturer and importer in an international arbitration against a global brand alleging breach of long-term distribution agreements.
- A global non-profit in civil litigation alleging defamation and fraud stemming from the purchase of a ranch and publicity surrounding an animal rescue operation.
- The president of a college charged with accepting improper gifts from contractors and vendors.
- A Major League Baseball franchise in an arbitration with a former senior executive.
- A former senior executive with a Taiwan-based company indicted by the Justice Department for antitrust violations in the TFT-LCD manufacturing industry.
- A senior engineer in the Volkswagen-Audi emissions investigation.
- Multiple senior Arthur Andersen accountants in the Enron investigation.
- A former Big 5 accounting partner indicted by the Justice Department for conspiracy, securities fraud, and wire fraud in connection with the financial reporting of a global software company.
- A dual Canadian-Israeli citizen who, while represented by prior counsel, pled guilty to a felony charge of money laundering based on his connection to a payment processing company that serviced an allegedly illegal online pharmacy. After an evidentiary hearing in which prior counsel testified for the government, the court granted the motion to withdraw the guilty plea.

Education

Stanford Law School JD, 1990

Princeton University, School of Public and International Affairs BA, 1987

Admissions & Credentials

California

Court Admissions

US Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit

US Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit

US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit

US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit

US District Court for the Central District of California

US District Court for the Northern District of California

US District Court for the Southern District of California

US District Court for the Southern District of Texas

US District Court for the District of Columbia

Rankings & Accolades

American College of Trial Lawyers, Fellow

The Legal 500 US: Dispute Resolution – Leading Trial Lawyers (2026)

The Daily Journal: Leading Commercial Litigators (2026)

US Attorney General's John Marshall Award for Legal Achievement (Trial)

Forbes: America's Top 250 Lawyers

Law360: White Collar MVP

The Daily Journal: Top 100 Attorneys in California

The Daily Journal: Top Defense Verdicts

The Recorder: Game Changer

Chambers USA: Band 1 for Litigation: General Commercial – California: San Diego (2020 – 2026)

The Legal 500 US: Dispute Resolution – General Commercial Disputes (2023 – 2026)

The Legal 500 US: Trade Secrets (Litigation and Non-Contentious Matters) (2021 – 2024)

Benchmark Litigation: Litigation, White Collar

San Diego Business Journal: SD 500 – The Most Influential People in San Diego (2022 – 2025)

Super Lawyers: Top 10 Lawyer in San Diego

Best Lawyers: Bet-the-Company Litigation, Commercial Litigation, White Collar Defense

Memberships & Affiliations

American College of Trial Lawyers