Zachary C. Freund

Associate Attorney

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Los Angeles



Zachary Freund is a litigation associate in Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher's Los Angeles office. His practice focuses on complex commercial litigation in both trial and appellate courts. Zach frequently represents clients from the sports, media, and entertainment sectors and has significant experience advocating for clients' First Amendment rights, including through the defense of defamation claims and the litigation of anti-SLAPP motions. He also represents clients in a variety of business disputes and high-stakes civil litigation, in areas as varied as constitutional law, administrative law, insurance law, environmental law, and data privacy law. As an experienced trial court litigator who also regularly handles appeals, Zach has repeatedly delivered victories for his clients in the trial court and then defended those same victories on appeal.

Representative First Amendment, sports, media, and entertainment matters include:

- Securing a jury verdict win for Nike in an endorsement contract dispute with NFL wide receiver Odell Beckham, Jr. Zach played a key role throughout the case, including by drafting Nike's winning motions for partial summary judgment and conducting the trial examination of an important defense witness. Following the jury's complete defense verdict in favor of Nike, AmLaw Litigation Daily recognized the Gibson Dunn team as "Litigators of the Week."
- Obtaining a complete defense victory for OpenAI on summary judgment against the first-ever defamation claim arising from generative artificial intelligence output. The Gibson Dunn team, including Zach, was named a runner-up for AmLaw Litigation Daily's "Litigators of the Week" and received *The Financial Times* 2025 Award for Innovative Lawyers in Disputes & Litigation.
- Successfully overturning an arbitration award on behalf of U.S. Olympic gymnast Jordan Chiles in her quest to reclaim the bronze medal that was rescinded following the 2024 Paris Olympic Games, through an appeal to the Swiss Federal Supreme Court.
- Representing The New York Times in a lawsuit against the Defense Department, challenging a Department policy that restricts reporters' access to the Pentagon on the basis of information they seek out and publish.
- Representing Warner Brothers in a high-profile contract dispute with the estate of writer Michael Crichton related to the HBO drama *The Pitt*.
- Representing Warner Brothers and Sony in a defamation action brought by a subject of the documentary TV series *Quiet on Set*.
- Representing NBC in a defamation action brought by Sean Combs, in connection with the Peacock documentary *Diddy: The Making of a Bad Boy*.
- Defending Nike against tort and contract claims brought by a former elite professional athlete.

Capabilities

Litigation
Appellate and Constitutional Law
Class Actions
Energy Regulation and Litigation
Energy and Infrastructure
First Amendment and Free Expression
Insurance and Reinsurance
Media, Entertainment, and Technology
Sports Law
Technology Litigation
Trials

Credentials

Education

Columbia University - 2018 Juris Doctor
Stanford University - 2009 Bachelor of Arts

Admissions

New York Bar
California Bar

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GIBSON DUNN

- Defending a leading academic publisher in a class action lawsuit concerning royalty payments for electronic textbooks.
- Defending one of the world's largest card payment organizations against defamation and business tort claims.
- Representing the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press and a coalition of leading news outlets in amicus briefing before the Ninth Circuit regarding the availability of anti-SLAPP motions in federal diversity actions.

Other representative matters include:

- Securing dismissals of multiple lawsuits challenging San Diego Gas & Electric Co.'s franchise agreements with the City of San Diego, including a summary judgment victory that The Daily Journal named as one of the Top Defense Verdicts of 2022. Zach was also the lead associate on the team that successfully defended that victory in the California Court of Appeal. *See Burton v. Campbell*, 106 Cal.App.5th 953 (2024).
- Persuading the Ninth Circuit to reverse a district court ruling and overturn agency action by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the grounds that it was "arbitrary and capricious" and in violation of the Endangered Species Act, in a major precedential administrative law decision. *See Center for Biological Diversity v. U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service*, 67 F.4th 1027 (9th Cir. 2023).
- Persuading the Ninth Circuit to affirm an eight-figure arbitration award on behalf of an international real-estate developer, in a long-running venture capital dispute. *See Global Industrial Investment Ltd. v. 1955 Capital Fund I GP LLC*, 2024 WL 3250369 (9th Cir. July 1, 2024).
- Persuading the California Court of Appeal to vacate an eight-figure jury verdict in a personal injury case, based on prejudicial evidentiary errors. *See McDonald v. Zargaryan*, 117 Cal.App.5th 344 (2025).

Zach's active pro bono practice has included impact litigation stemming from the separation of families along the U.S. southern border and representation of domestic violence victims in family court. In 2025, Zach led a trial team that helped their client obtain a domestic violence restraining order and full custody of her young children.

Zach joined Gibson Dunn after serving as a law clerk to the Honorable Gerard E. Lynch of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit and the Honorable Nicholas G. Garaufis of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York. He previously worked as a litigation associate in the New York office of another large international law firm.

Zach graduated from Columbia Law School in 2018. At Columbia, Zach was awarded the Ruth Bader Ginsburg Prize for achieving highest academic honors in all three years, the Robert Noxan Toppan Prize for Constitutional Law, and the Hamilton Fellowship, a full-tuition merit scholarship. Zach also served as senior editor and ombudsperson of the Columbia Law Review. Zach graduated from Stanford University in 2009, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts with Distinction, with majors in English and Drama, and spent most of his time putting on productions of Shakespeare plays. Before law school, he worked in the theater field for several years as a director, dramaturg, and non-profit administrator.

Zach is admitted to practice in the States of California and New York, the U.S. Courts of Appeals for the Third and Ninth Circuits, and the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California.

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