Thomas A. Manakides

Partner

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Dallas Orange County



Thomas Manakides is a nationally recognized litigator and trial lawyer who represents companies in high-stakes commercial, mass tort, oil and gas, and environmental litigation. For more than two decades, clients have turned to him to handle their most challenging disputes. Recognized for his versatility, he combines seasoned courtroom advocacy with strategic judgment in complex disputes. He has successfully defended large-scale, multi-jurisdictional matters involving thousands of plaintiffs and substantial financial exposure. He practices in Texas and California.

Chambers USA consistently ranks Thomas as a leading lawyer in Environment–California, noting his “experience in defending companies in high-stakes environmental litigation” and specifically identifying his “particular expertise in matters concerning toxic tort and negligence claims.” He is also recognized in recent editions of the *Lawdragon 500 Leading U.S. Environmental Lawyers* guide for his environmental litigation and mass tort practice. Thomas is also a Fellow of the American Bar Foundation.

Mass Tort and Environmental Litigation. Thomas has more than 20 years of experience handling mass tort and environmental disputes in state and federal courts nationwide. His matters frequently involve large plaintiff groups, complex scientific issues, and significant potential liability. He has handled matters alleging exposure to substances such as benzene, methane, trichloroethylene (TCE), and DBCP, as well as claims involving odor, noise, and other environmental impacts. Representative matters include:

- Defend **The Boeing Company** against wildfire claims by approximately 1,200 plaintiffs in more than 50 complaints alleging damages arising from the Woolsey Fire in Southern California. Thomas leads the litigation team and oversees strategy across all phases of the case. In 2023, the trial court dismissed all of plaintiffs’ claims and entered judgment in Boeing’s favor. The matter is currently on appeal.

- Represent **Dole Food Company, Inc.** against several actions in state and federal district courts throughout the country filed by thousands of foreign plaintiffs alleging sterility from exposure to DBCP. For years, Thomas led the strategy and management of this national litigation docket and secured key victories, including the dismissal of thousands of plaintiffs on limitations grounds in state courts, the dismissal of claims by plaintiffs from Costa Rica, Panama, and Ecuador under Delaware’s first-filed rule, and summary judgment against thousands of Central American plaintiffs in federal courts in Louisiana and Delaware.

  Thomas was also a key member of the team that uncovered a large-scale attorney-orchestrated fraud originating in Nicaragua and imported into California courts. This effort culminated in a dismissal with prejudice of several California cases consolidated as *Mejia v. Dole Food* following a trial exposing the fraud. In *Tellez v. Dole Food*, Thomas obtained an order vacating a jury verdict and, after a multi-week trial, entry of judgment in Dole’s favor based on fraud on the court and

Capabilities

Litigation
Environmental
Mass Torts and Product Liability
Real Estate Disputes
Transnational Litigation

Credentials

Education

University of Southern California - 2003 Juris Doctor

Pepperdine University - 2000 Bachelor of Arts

Admissions

California Bar

Texas Bar

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extortion.

- Represent developers against claims by approximately 1,500 homeowners alleging property damage and personal injuries arising from vapor intrusion of benzene and methane in a residential community. Following Thomas' cross-examination of plaintiffs' key expert, the court excluded the expert—describing him as a "bogus expert" whose opinions lacked objective support. After additional expert exclusions, the matter settled.

- Represent a major waste collection and recycling company in a mass tort and nuisance action brought by nearly 100 plaintiffs alleging personal injuries and property damage arising from odor and noise. Thomas successfully obtained an order eliminating plaintiffs' permanent nuisance claim and their claims for diminution in property value, significantly narrowing the case before a settlement was reached.

- Defend **Lockheed Martin** in a large-scale toxic tort action brought by 800 plaintiffs who alleged personal injury and property damage as a result of exposure to TCE and ammonium perchlorate in drinking water. The trial court dismissed the claims of the first-tier plaintiffs, which the appellate court affirmed.

Oil and Gas Litigation. Thomas has a proven track record litigating and trying upstream oil and gas disputes, representing major clients such as **Chevron U.S.A. Inc.** In one matter involving enhanced recovery operations in the Midway-Sunset Oil Field, Thomas represented Chevron in a substantial dispute involving negligence, nuisance, and trespass claims by a neighboring oil operator. Following an eight-week jury trial, the trial court granted Chevron's motion for a new trial, and the matter ultimately resolved in a settlement while it was pending before the California Supreme Court. Thomas currently represents Chevron in pending litigation against the Governor of California and the state's oil and gas regulator challenging an illegal ban on fracking in the state purportedly based on climate change. The first phase of the case was tried in early 2026.

Regulatory Advice and Defense. Thomas is also highly skilled in guiding clients through the complexities of federal, state, and local regulations. He has provided strategic advice related to refinery operations, litigated disputes over cleanup costs and other damages associated with environmental contamination, and challenged regulatory orders and enforcement actions. Representative matters include:

- Represent a developer in challenging a cleanup and abatement order issued by a water board naming the company a responsible party and discharger.

- Represent **Athens Services** in a regulatory enforcement action by an air district and related litigation seeking civil penalties and injunctive relief that threatened closure of a recycling facility. The matter resolved favorably following administrative proceedings and early trial court briefing.

- Obtain a complete defense judgment in favor of a test instrument company in a cost recovery action involving groundwater and soil contamination from TCE and PCE. After targeted discovery, the court granted summary judgment and awarded defense costs.

Complex Commercial Litigation. Thomas has experience handling complex, high-stakes commercial disputes often involving substantial financial exposure, including matters involving financial transactions, bankruptcy-related claims, and real estate disputes. His experience includes successfully defeating an emergency attempt to enjoin a nonjudicial foreclosure on an $80 million commercial property loan, resulting in dismissal of the claims with prejudice. Thomas represents **Dole Fresh Fruit Company** in an ongoing adversary proceeding in the Southern District of New York and **Pitney Bowes** in litigation in Illinois and Texas.

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Pro Bono and Community Involvement. Thomas is deeply committed to pro bono service and community involvement. He previously served on the Board of Directors for The Priority Center, which serves at-risk children and families in crisis, and on the Board of Directors for the Public Law Center, Orange County's pro bono law firm providing legal services to low-income residents.

Education and Background. Thomas received his J.D. from the University of Southern California Law School, where he was elected to the Order of the Coif and served as Submission Editor for the *Southern California Law Review*. He earned his B.A., *magna cum laude*, in Political Science from Pepperdine University.

He is admitted to practice in California and Texas and before multiple federal courts, including the U.S. Courts of Appeals for the Ninth and Fifth Circuits.

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