

Connor S. Sullivan

Partner

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New York

Connor Sullivan is a partner in the New York office of Gibson Dunn and Co-Chair of the firm's First Amendment and Free Expression practice group. He represents technology and media companies in high-stakes litigation in state and federal court, including multiple jury trials involving billions of dollars in claims. He has significant experience with founders' disputes, breach of contract and tort claims, and copyright and trademark issues, involving products ranging from social media platforms to artificial intelligence and fintech applications. He has represented the founders of the dating app Tinder in litigation that resulted in a \$441 million settlement paid to his clients, a global social media company in defending against claims brought by a purported co-founder, a wholesale supply and logistics company in a \$125 million breach of contract litigation, and one of the world's largest technology companies in multidistrict antitrust litigation.

Connor regularly litigates claims involving the First Amendment, especially defamation defense, for technology companies, media and entertainment clients, and news media organizations. He helped secure several of the firm's major recent First Amendment victories, including a complete victory at summary judgment in defeating the first-ever defamation claim arising from generative artificial intelligence output—a result *The American Lawyer* recognized in its "Litigator of the Week" feature. Before joining the firm, Connor served as a member of the trial team in one of the largest defamation suits ever tried. He is a co-author of "Defamation and Reputation Management in the United States" for the global research platform Lexology and co-hosts the firm's regular webinar on developments in First Amendment jurisprudence. Connor has also worked on behalf of pro bono clients in connection with immigration and First Amendment rights.

Law360 recognized Connor as a Rising Star in Media & Entertainment for 2026, one of only three lawyers in the country awarded this distinction. He was selected by *The American Lawyer* as a finalist for Young Lawyer of the Year in Litigation. He was a member of the team honored with the *Financial Times*' Innovative Lawyers North America 2025 award for Disputes and Litigation. *Best Lawyers: Ones to Watch® in America* has repeatedly recognized him in Entertainment and Sports Law and Appellate Practice. *Super Lawyers* consistently names him to its New York Metro "Rising Stars" list for litigation.

Significant representations include:*

Technology Matters

- Secured a complete defense victory at summary judgment against the first-ever defamation claim arising from generative artificial intelligence output.
- Represented the founders, early executives, and employees of the online dating application Tinder in a four-year multibillion-dollar litigation, which settled at the conclusion of a month-long jury trial with the defendants paying Gibson Dunn's clients \$441 million.



Capabilities

Litigation
Appellate and Constitutional Law
Artificial Intelligence
First Amendment and Free Expression
Intellectual Property
Media, Entertainment, and Technology
Privacy, Cybersecurity, and Data
Innovation
Tech and Innovation
Technology Litigation
Trials

Credentials

Education

Yale University - 2013 Juris Doctor
University of Virginia - 2008 Bachelor of Arts

Admissions

New York Bar
District of Columbia Bar

Clerkships

US Court of Appeals, DC Circuit, Hon.
Thomas B. Griffith, 2014 - 2015
USDC, Southern District of New York, Hon.
Katherine Polk Failla, 2013 - 2014

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- Defended a social media company against a breach of implied contract claim brought by a purported co-founder who alleged she had created the company's technology product.
- Defending a global technology company in significant antitrust multidistrict litigation.
- Representing a property management software developer in a First Amendment challenge to a state statute criminalizing the use of its software.
- Counseled a cryptocurrency company on contract terms and free-speech protections regarding social media promotion of crypto products.
- Represented a fintech startup in trade secret litigation against a competitor launched by a departing employee.
- Represented an artificial intelligence developer in enforcing non-compete and non-solicitation agreements.

Media and Entertainment Litigation

- Argued and won the motion to dismiss, obtaining dismissal with prejudice, in a \$100 million defamation lawsuit filed by Sean "Diddy" Combs against NBCUniversal and Peacock arising from the streaming documentary "*Diddy: The Making of a Bad Boy*."
- Defending Warner Bros. Discovery and Sony Pictures Entertainment against a defamation claim brought by a prominent television producer arising from a streaming documentary.
- Defending a global streaming service, documentary filmmakers, and others against a defamation claim arising from a documentary series.
- Defending a global entertainment company and the actor/producer/screenwriter team responsible for an Emmy-winning streaming drama against a breach of contract claim.
- Defended a national news network against defamation and product disparagement claims seeking billions of dollars in damages, including a month-long jury trial.
- Representing the former MSNBC host Joy Reid against a defamation claim.
- Successfully represented White House press corps reporters in First Amendment and Due Process Clause challenges to obtain the return of their press credentials after they were suspended by the White House Press Office.
- Represented Mary Trump, the niece of President Donald Trump, in successfully defeating an attempt by the Trump family to prevent the publication of her bestselling family memoir *Too Much and Never Enough*.

Prior to joining Gibson Dunn, Connor was an associate at a prominent firm in Washington, D.C., where he focused on defending news organizations in defamation actions. He was also involved in significant copyright, product liability, and breach of contract actions.

He clerked for the Honorable Thomas B. Griffith of the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit and the Honorable Katherine Polk Failla of the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York. In the summer after law school, he served as what is now called a Phillips Fellow in the Office of the Solicitor General at the Department of Justice.

Connor graduated from Yale Law School in 2013, where he was a director of the law school's Supreme Court clinic, an editor of the *Yale Law Journal*, the Executive Editor of the *Yale Journal on Regulation*, and a winner of the Morris Tyler Moot Court competition. He published an academic comment entitled *A First Amendment Approach to Generic Drug Manufacturer Tort Liability*, 123 Yale L.J. 495 (2013). Prior to law school, Connor was a strategy and operations consultant for McKinsey & Company. He graduated with distinction from the University of Virginia in 2008, where he was elected to Phi Beta

Kappa.

Connor is admitted to practice in New York and the District of Columbia, and before the United States Supreme Court, the United States Courts of Appeals for the Second, Third, Fourth, Sixth, Ninth, and District of Columbia Circuits, and the United States District Courts for the Southern and Eastern Districts of New York and the District of Columbia.

** Includes matters Connor handled prior to joining Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher.*

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