William E. Thomson

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Los Angeles



William E. Thomson is a litigation partner in the Los Angeles office of Gibson Dunn. He is Co-Chair of the firm's Transnational Litigation Practice Group, which *Legal 500* US 2025 has again ranked Tier 1, International litigation. He is also a member of the firm's Appellate and Constitutional Law and Environmental Practice Groups. Bill's practice focuses on federal and state appellate and Supreme Court litigation, and on strategic analysis and briefing in high-stakes cases in trial courts around the country. Bill has extensive experience litigating and counseling on complex U.S. and cross-border matters before both trial and appellate courts in a broad range of contexts, including civil RICO, product liability and mass tort, foreign judgment recognition, First Amendment litigation, and class actions. He has advised on and litigated matters implicating the competing laws of multiple U.S. jurisdictions and dozens of countries around the world, including supply chain liability risks, corporate separateness issues, and cross-border evidentiary actions pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1782.

In both the transnational and domestic contexts, clients regularly rely on Bill to help them develop comprehensive global strategies. Bill has extensive experience with constitutional challenges to state and federal statutes and caselaw, including punitive damages and statutory penalties, and he works regularly with inside- and outside co-counsel to develop innovative, cutting-edge trial and appellate strategies to address such issues. He has played a key role in a number of the firm's most high-profile transnational, mass tort and product liability, and environmental matters. Bill has been recognized as a Leading Partner by *The Legal 500 US*, named one of *Lawdragon's 500 Leading Global Litigators*, and has been recognized in *The Best Lawyers in America*® since 2023 for his Appellate practice.

- Bill is one of the principal lawyers representing Chevron Corporation in the large number of climate change actions that state and municipal governments have filed around the country pursuant to various state laws, alleging claims for public and private nuisance, product liability, and deceptive sales—attempting thereby to shift liability for national and international energy policy choices onto energy producers. To date, Chevron has prevailed in motions to dismiss in every court to reach the merits. *See*, *e.g.*, *City of New York v. Chevron Corp.*, 993 F.3d 81,85 (2d Cir. 2021) ("The question before us is whether municipalities may utilize state tort law to hold multinational oil companies liable for the damages caused by global greenhouse gas emissions. Given the nature of the harm and the existence of a complex web of federal and international environmental law regulating such emissions, we hold that the answer is "no.").
- Bill represents Chevron Corporation in its multifaceted defense against purported environmental claims emanating from Ecuador, in which U.S. and Ecuadorian lawyers obtained a purported $18 billion judgment from an Ecuadorian court. Among other things, Bill spearheaded the extensive briefing in Chevron's RICO case in the Southern District of New York, in which the company successfully sued the U.S. and Ecuadorian lawyers and other agents for racketeering and fraud. In its

Capabilities

Litigation

Appellate and Constitutional Law

ESG: Risk, Litigation, and Reporting

Environmental

Mass Torts and Product Liability

Transnational Litigation

Credentials

Education

University of Chicago - 1996 Doctor of Philosophy

University of California - Los Angeles - 1996 Juris Doctor

University of Chicago - 1987 Master of Arts

Princeton University - 1985 Bachelor of Arts

Admissions

California Bar

Clerkships

USDC, Central District of California, Hon. Robert J. Kelleher, 1996 - 1997

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485-page opinion, the court described the case as “extraordinary” and “includ[ing] things that normally come only out of Hollywood,” such as “coded emails,” “payments out of a secret account,” videotaped evidence of crimes in progress, and blockbuster evidence that the defendants “wrote the [Ecuadorian] court’s Judgment themselves and promised $500,000 to the Ecuadorian judge to rule in their favor and sign their judgment.” The New York Times described the result as a “major victory,” and the Washington Post called it “resounding.” A unanimous Second Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed, noting that “[t]he record . . . reveals a parade of corrupt actions.” Bill continues to advise Chevron on a range of issues flowing from this high-stakes, complex matter and in related foreign enforcement and international arbitration matters.

- Bill regularly works with a broad variety of companies on strategies to assess and limit their product liability exposure, including in the on-line marketplace space. Bill has deep experience developing and marshaling constitutional challenges to state-law regimes such as those governing punitive damages and their related underlying liability standards, especially in the product liability context. In this capacity, he works with companies to formulate both immediate-need and long-term trial and appellate strategies, briefing related motions and appeals in numerous jurisdictions around the country and acting as national appellate advisor to trial teams at all stages of the proceeding. He played a principal role on behalf of Ford Motor Company in persuading the United States Supreme Court to vacate what had been the largest personal injury award ever affirmed in U.S. history—and on remand convinced the court of appeal to cut the award by over 90%—as well as convincing the California Supreme Court to reject the “aggregate profit disgorgement” theory of punitive damages.
- Bill has long played a leading role in defending Dole Food Company, Inc. in its national and international mass tort/product liability litigation involving the nematicide DBCP, brought by thousands of plaintiffs from Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Panama, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, and the Ivory Coast. Cases currently are pending in Hawaii and Delaware. He was a key member of the team that successfully represented Dole in both the district court and Eleventh Circuit in the *Osorio v. Dole* action filed in the Southern District of Florida, where plaintiffs sought to enforce a bellwether Nicaraguan judgment totaling approximately $100 million. Bill was instrumental in obtaining the dismissal of three DBCP cases pending in the Los Angeles Superior Court as a terminating sanction for plaintiffs’ and their counsel’s fraud on the court in the widely noted *Tellez*, *Mejia*, and *Rivera* cases, and successfully defended the trial court decisions on appeal.
- In both the transnational and domestic settings, Bill has led numerous civil cases brought pursuant to the Racketeer & Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO), representing both civil RICO plaintiffs and defendants in a variety of industry contexts. He has written and spoken frequently on RICO-related topics. Representative RICO matters include, in addition to Chevron’s lawsuit against the lawyers suing it in Ecuador, defending automaker Aston Martin (*Fisker v. Aston Martin Lagonda*, C.D. Cal. 2015) (voluntarily dismissed by Fisker, with no settlement); defending Chevron U.S.A. (*Committee to Protect Our Agricultural Water v. Chevron*, E.D. Cal. 2016) (court granted motion to dismiss; plaintiff dismissed rather than try to amend complaint); defending nursing home owners and officers (*Kan-di-Ki v. Paulson*, C.D. Cal. 2017) (motion to dismiss granted; affirmed on appeal); defending Lynn Tilton and Patriarch Partners *Zohar CDO 2003-1 Ltd. et al. v. Patriarch Partners LLC et al.*(S.D.N.Y. 2017) (motion to dismiss granted based on securities fraud bar of 18 U.S.C. §1964(c)).
- Bill also played a key role in *Perez v. Dole Food Company, Inc.*, successfully defeating hundreds of false claims that Dole Food Company funded and directed the activities of AUC paramilitaries in the banana-growing regions of Colombia and was responsible for hundreds of deaths in connection with Colombia’s internal conflict between warring paramilitaries and guerrillas in that region. Plaintiffs voluntarily dismissed their claims with prejudice after Gibson Dunn uncovered evidence of improper interactions between plaintiffs’ counsel and jailed paramilitary witnesses.

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Bill served as a judicial clerk to the Honorable Robert J. Kelleher in the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California. He received his law degree from the University of California, Los Angeles, School of Law. He earned a Ph.D. degree and an M.A. degree from the University of Chicago, and an A.B. degree from Princeton University, all in the field of political science. At the University of Chicago he was a John M. Olin Fellow at the Center for Inquiry Into the Theory and Practice of Democracy. For his dissertation on the political theory of Alexis de Tocqueville he conducted research in Paris. He is fluent in French and conversant in Spanish.

Bill is admitted to practice before the Supreme Court of the United States, California Supreme Court, Second Circuit Court of Appeals, Third Circuit Court of Appeals, Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals, Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals, the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals, and the United States District Courts for the Central, Northern, Eastern, and Southern Districts of California.

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