

Local litigation firms

Highly recommended

Haynsworth Sinkler Boyd

Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough

Nexsen Pruet

Wyche Burgess Freeman & Parham

Recommended

Buist Moore Smythe McGee

Smith Moore Leatherwood

McNair Law Firm

Ogletree Deakins Nash Smoak & Stewart

Parker Poe Adams Bernstein

Pratt-Thomas Walker

Sowell Gray Stepp & Laffitte

Young Clement & Rivers

South Carolina

Business litigation seems to be a growing trend, with bankruptcy and products liability practices holding strong. However, South Carolina made news recently when a number of magistrates were sanctioned or suspended by the state Supreme Court. Judges were reprimanded for using racial slurs, asking a clerk to tape a sexual encounter and calling cocaine addiction a “black man’s disease” while discussing a warrant.

Highly recommended firms

Haynsworth Sinkler Boyd has more than 135 lawyers spread across offices in Charleston, Columbia, Florence and Greenville. The firm believes “constant reinvestment” in its lawyers while “encouraging performance of work at the most efficient level and on budget.” Lawyers come with significant experience including former mayors, city prosecutors and general counsel at commercial banks. Major litigation platforms include antitrust, mass torts, insurance, products liability and real estate law. The firm recently expanded the healthcare team with the addition of a lawyer in the Charleston office. The firm frequently counsels clients on how to avoid litigation as well, and how to reduce risk when potential claims arise.

Marvin Infinger’s litigation work emphasizes construction, business and maritime law. Clients seek his mediator services and his appellate knowledge as well. With more than 40 years of experience, **Dewey Oxner** handles cases of malpractice defense and products liability for physicians, hospitals and insurance companies. **John Tiller** focuses his litigation practice on products liability, premises liability and personal injury actions. Case history includes “the successful resolution of 548 separate claims on behalf of an asphalt paving contractor.” Employment law, products liability and commercial defense litigation are main practice areas for **Courtney Atkinson**. She serves members of the community through efforts on the Board of Directors at YouthBASE, a local non-profit group working with at-risk children.

Class actions, products liability and securities are major practice areas of **Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough**. Offices spread from across the state, reaching up to the District of Columbia and Boston. The firm maintains a strong commitment to clients and communities surrounding the various office locations. Many of the locations, including Atlanta, Washington, Raleigh and Charlotte, continue to grow with the additions of several new lawyers. Intellectual property continues its run, as the firm handles cases for several pharmaceutical clients. Current trials in South Carolina for the firm include cases of breach of contract, toxic torts, warranty and real estate litigation. Representative clients include AT&T, General Motors and Wal-Mart.

Robert Brunson, in the Charleston office, handles areas of business law including

antitrust, product liability, trusts and securities litigation. Brunson serves as vice-chair of the transportation industry group and as part of the coastal development and land use group. Chair of the executive committee, **David Dukes** receives mention for his work on products liability law. He represents clients in computer and pharmaceutical-related litigation. He serves the community and the legal arena through the Lawyers for Civil Justice, where he is chairman of the board of directors. The group describes itself as “a national coalition supporting excellence, fairness and improvements within the civil justice system.” **Stephen Morrison**, former chair of the firm, focuses his litigation skills in products liability and has tried more than 240 cases to jury verdict. An avid member of the community, Morrison dedicates time to the Columbia Urban League and the Richland County Public Defender Corporation. For business litigation, clients turn to **S Keith Hutto**, who emphasizes business torts, class actions, computer and distribution litigation, while **Joel Smith** focuses on product liability defense in automotive and pharmaceutical cases. **Wade Logan III** receives mention for his product liability and professional negligence defense practice. Associate **William Starr** emphasizes pharmaceutical liability cases in his litigation practice and has experience handling several types of product liability actions.

Nexsen Pruet spreads its reach across the Southeast in both Carolinas with the full litany of trial services. Based in Columbia, the firm has more than 170 attorneys practicing in its diverse practices boasting “significant advantages to clients in terms of outstanding individual lawyers, a depth of talent and extensive experience in many areas.” Lawyers devote a large amount of time to litigation with general commercial, insurance, real estate and employment law. The firm recently scored a large antitrust win, a \$107 million settlement, for 17 different textile companies against Hoechst Celanese. Clients included Greenwood Mills, Inman Mills and Mount Vernon Mill for conspiracy and discovery abuse.

With more than 25 years of experience, **Susan McWilliams** focuses her litigation practice on defending clients in business torts, products liability, professional liability and contract disputes. Peers mention her work in employment and labor matters as well. **Thomas Stephenson** also receives mention for his stellar employment practice, while **Thomas Tisdale**



Local litigation stars

Jackson Barnes Sowell Gray Stepp & Laffitte	Wade Logan III Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough	John Smith Young Clement & Rivers
Michael Beal McNair Law Firm	Joseph Major Smith Moore Leatherwood	Henry Smythe Buist Moore Smythe McGee
Robert Brunson Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough	David McCormack Buist Moore Smythe McGee	Thornwell Sowell Sowell Gray Stepp & Laffitte
Robert Byrd Parker Poe Adams Bernstein	Susan McWilliams Nexsen Pruet	Thomas Stephenson Nexsen Pruet
Donald Cockrill Ogletree Deakins Nash Smoak & Stewart	Stephen Morrison Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough	Robert Stepp Sowell Gray Stepp & Laffitte
David Dukes Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough	Carl Muller Wyche Burgess Freeman & Parham	John Tiller Haynsworth Sinkler Boyd
Allen Gibson Buist Moore Smythe McGee	Dewey Oxner Haynsworth Sinkler Boyd	Thomas Tisdale Nexsen Pruet
Michael Giese Smith Moore Leatherwood	James Parham Wyche Burgess Freeman & Parham	Elizabeth Van Doren Gray Sowell Gray Stepp & Laffitte
Keith Hutto Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough	Henry Parr Wyche Burgess Freeman & Parham	Trenholm Walker Pratt-Thomas Walker
Marvin Infinger Haynsworth Sinkler Boyd	Gordon Schreck Buist Moore Smythe McGee	Rutledge Young Young Clement & Rivers
Wallace Lightsey Wyche Burgess Freeman & Parham	Joel Smith Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough	

handles insurance disputes. **Molly Cherry** serves clients in both employment and insurance matters, and is part of the products liability practice.

Serving the community for more than 100 years, **Wyche Burgess Freeman & Parham** prides itself on providing clients and community efforts in the state with lawyers that are “handpicked” for their “skills and accomplishments” to “provide unmatched service.” The firm believes that legal fees should not be a “one-size-fits-all” idea, and offers clients a variety of “alternative fee arrangements,” rather than the standard billable hour rates. Insurance, employment, products liability, torts and intellectual property are main focus areas for the firm. One recent case includes representation of Super Duper Publications, a company that makes toys for children with special education needs, against Mattel. The firm successfully defended Super Duper on several claims in the case, based on unfair competition, alleged fraud and trademark infringement disputes.

Wallace Lightsey devotes a significant amount of time to First Amendment, intellectual property and media law. Representative clients range from *The New York Times* and the Associated Press to local media such as *The Greenville News* and *The Spartanburg Herald*. **Carl Muller**, who also handles First Amendment matters, receives mention for his healthcare practice. Prominent trial lawyers **James Parham** and **Henry Parr** receive accolades for their healthcare and commercial litigation experience. **Troy Tessier**

serves several areas of litigation including First Amendment law, personal injury and intellectual property.

Recommended firms

Buist Moore Smythe McGee remains a strong contender in the Charleston litigation market. Prominent practice areas include products liability, construction, employment, environmental, maritime and insurance law. Members of the firm recently appeared before the South Carolina Supreme Court to support proposed amendments to South Carolina’s Rules of Civil Procedure. One proposed amendment includes a procedure to determine whether the opinions of an expert will be admissible during trial. Case representation includes the Mississippi-based steel company SeverCorr in a lawsuit brought by Nucor Corporation regarding South Carolina’s Uniform Trade Secrets Act.

Attorney **Allen Gibson** has experience handling construction and contracts matters for developers, design professionals, homeowners, public agencies and general contractors. With a focus on maritime law, **Gordon Schreck** serves as head of the department and handles cases involving personal injury, collisions, marine finance and marine environmental pollution. Head of the employment group, **David McCormack** handles litigation regarding employment contacts, disability law requirements, wrongful termination and harassment claims. Representation experience includes defending employers against several allegations of

discrimination based on race, sex, age and disability. Product liability, mass tort and class action litigation are major focus areas of litigator **Henry Smythe**, who also serves as the managing director. Case work includes representation of a tobacco manufacturer against wrongful death suits and various car manufacturers against personal injury and wrongful death claims. **David Cox** serves as chair of the products liability group, and handles cases for several tire, car and recreational products manufacturers.

McNair Law Firm offers clients eight offices spread across the state, and one in North Carolina. The firm recently merged with Gottlieb & Smith, and added the firm’s attorneys to the Columbia office. McNair added former South Carolina education superintendent Inez Tenenbaum to the roster as well. Committed to the community and its clients, the firm constantly looks for “business opportunities and growth for clients beyond the specific engagement at hand.” Practice areas for the firm include bankruptcy, construction, commercial, employment, product liability and intellectual property. Past clients include Flagstar Companies, Georgetown Steel Company and Landmark Land Company of Carolina.

Michael Beal handles bankruptcy matters for companies in Chapter 11 situations as well as for “distressed companies and financial institutions in out-of-court restructurings.” Associate **Hunter Freeman** handles matters of intellectual property, including the enforcement of trademarks and copyrights, non-disclosure

Future stars

Courtney Atkinson
Haynsworth Sinkler Boyd

Molly Cherry
Nexsen Pruet

David Cox
Buist Moore Smythe McGee

Hunter Freeman
McNair Law Firm

Amy Hill
Sowell Gray Stepp & Laffitte

Matthew Johnson
Ogletree Deakins Nash Smoak & Stewart

Ellis Lesemann
Parker Poe Adams Bernstein

Chip McQueeney
Pratt-Thomas Walker

Jason Nutzman
Smith Moore Leatherwood

Kurt Rozelsky
Smith Moore Leatherwood

William Starr
Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough

Troy Tessier
Wyche Burgess Freeman & Parham

Jeffrey Wiseman
Young Clement & Rivers

agreements and trade secrets for companies in the aviation, nuclear engineering, and software development industries.

Peers and clients often name **Ogletree Deakins Nash Smoak & Stewart** for counsel regarding employment issues. The firm boasts a “diverse range of clients” from “Fortune 50 corporations to start-up companies – from coast to coast.” The firm has grown with the addition of several new lawyers across offices, many of whom were hired laterally. One notable addition includes Jim Micali, the outgoing president and chairman for Michelin North America.

Donald Cockrill tries cases involving employment, medical malpractice, personal injury and toxic tort litigation. His experience includes cases of toxicology, epidemiology and lab testing procedures. **Matthew Johnson** focuses his practice on employment, products liability and class action defense litigation.

Parker Poe Adams & Bernstein receives mention in South Carolina for its extensive Southeastern litigation practice. Contract, construction, healthcare, intellectual property and white-collar criminal defense are all strong practice areas of the firm. Office locations include Charleston, Columbia, Myrtle Beach and Spartanburg. The firm offers clients consulting services through the Columbia office in addition to legal matters.

Commercial, real estate and insurance litigation are main practice areas for **Robert Byrd**. He has experience with landlord-tenant, partnership, bad faith actions and other first-party insurance matters. **Ellis Lesemann** handles cases involving construction, real estate and employment law. Experience in business litigation includes shareholder disputes and business torts.

Charleston firm **Pratt-Thomas Walker** has built a strong reputation for a broad spectrum of litigation. Practice areas include contract, construction, insurance, intellectual property, professional malpractice, products liability and securities. Litigators in the boutique firm offer clients “years of experience and are highly skilled in their respective areas of practice,” despite the firm’s size of only 12 lawyers. With several litigation areas of expertise, **G Trenholm Walker** receives mention for his products liability and alternative dispute resolution practice. Commitments to the community include serving as director of the Preservation Society of Charleston. **Chip McQueeney** serves clients through his civil litigation practice and handles appellate advocacy matters as well.

With only 18 lawyers, **Sowell Gray Stepp & Laffitte** has a “reputation for excellence, high standards, and community service.” Practice strengths include employment, medical malpractice and products liability. Peers note the success of the insurance, reinsurance and personal injury defense practices as well. The firm takes a prominent role in the Columbia

community through the Historic Columbia Foundation and South Carolina Access to Justice Commission.

Jackson Barnes earns accolades for his construction and commercial litigation practices. **Thornwell Sowell** and **Robert Stepp** both receive praise for their general commercial litigation practices. Stepp spends time practicing in Constitutional law matters as well. **Elizabeth Van Doren Gray** handles business, commercial and probate litigation. **Amy Hill** receives mention for her commercial and professional malpractice work.

The law offices of Smith Moore Leatherwood joined forces with Smith Moore in North Carolina to form **Smith Moore Leatherwood**. The merger will broaden the litigation scope of both firms, now with offices throughout the I-85 corridor. The firm, now composed of roughly 180 lawyers, aims to provide clients with “quality work and the highest levels of service.” The firm values “trust, communication and efficiency” when handling work for clients. Major practice areas include antitrust, class action, intellectual property and toxic torts.

Michael Giese handles commercial litigation cases with an emphasis on issues relating to technology. Case work includes breach of contracts and non-compete covenants. **Joseph Major** focuses his work on commercial litigation involving insurance, products liability, catastrophic injury and toxic torts. Business and insurance litigation are the primary practice areas of **Jason Nutzman**, who also handles employment cases related to discrimination and wage disputes. **Kurt Rozelsky** primarily represents insurance companies in relation to torts, defense of products liability, professional liability and premises liability.

Young Clement & Rivers believes in providing clients with the “the latest technological advancements, leveraging memberships in international law associations that provide access to information and research worldwide and maintaining a constant commitment to total quality management.” With an office in Columbia, and another in Charleston, the firm receives mention for their medical malpractice, products liability and insurance practices. One recent case involves an employment litigation matter for client Costco regarding a customer who tried to obtain prescription drugs without a proper prescription. The court granted a motion to dismiss for the client in a state court.

John Smith receives accolades for his professional liability practice, while **J Rutledge Young** receives mention for his health care and professional liability focus. Young spends time in the special task litigation division of the firm that handles complex commercial matters. **Jeffrey Wiseman** focuses his time on products liability and insurance coverage litigation.

