SpencerFane®

Spencer Fane Elects 13 New Attorneys to Partnership in 2025

Spencer Fane is pleased to announce 13 new attorneys have been elected to the partnership, underscoring the firm's commitment to internal advancement as an integral component of professional development. The new partners include Wale Akinmoladun (Kansas City); Edward Burdzinski (Houston); Gene Cherng (San Jose); Eleanor D'Ambrosio (Austin); Chase Fann (Nashville); Tara Holterhaus (Omaha); Paul Jacobson (Kansas City); Kimberly Kerns (Plano); Daniel Nelson (Kansas City); Serena O'Neil (Minneapolis); John Peckler (Denver); Benjamin Shantz (Springfield); and Scott Young (Salt Lake City).

"Each of our new partners exemplify not only exceptional technical experience but also what it means to live out our firm's core values whether in regard to their humility, commitment to collaboration, or delivering results-driven service to clients," said Spencer Fane Chair Patrick J. Whalen. "We congratulate them on this hard-earned and well-deserved career milestone and look forward to witnessing the impact their marked talents will have on our firm, clients, and our communities."

Meet each of the firm's newest partners below.

Wale Akinmoladun

Wale represents school districts, health and commercial insurance companies, employers, and other businesses and individuals involved in state and federal litigation and administrative fair hearing appeals. He proactively works to settle differences by using dispute resolution to anticipate, avoid, and resolve litigation, receiving favorable results for a wide array of allegations and claims.

After receiving his undergraduate degree from the University of Missouri, Wale earned his Juris Doctor at the University's Kansas City School of Law. While in law school, he worked as a research assistant for the late Patrick A. Randolph Jr., who was highly regarded in real estate and development both domestically and abroad. Wale notably updated the *Friedman on Leases* treatise by reviewing federal and state cases regarding commercial and residential leases.

Edward Burdzinski

With a legal career spanning more than three decades, including 12 years as general counsel of a community bank, Ed's extensive industry experience informs his practical approach to client service. He regularly delivers commercial loan documentation for financial institutions, including commercial construction, real estate, and asset-based credit facilities.

Ed also negotiates with borrower representatives, title companies, and other parties, moving the transaction to closing while protecting the lender's interests. Additionally, he guides clients in the areas of operations and credit facility enforcement, and he trains teams at financial institutions on the loan formation process and collections. Ed earned his Juris Doctor at the University of Houston Law Center after receiving his undergraduate degree from Michigan State University.

Gene Cherng

An IP attorney admitted to the patent bar, Gene has successfully represented patent owners and accused infringers alike in the district courts and the U.S. Patent Office in cases involving technologies in the software, electrical, and mechanical arts. He has significant experience with dynamic random-access memory, augmented reality, video and audio encoding, inductors and electrical components, network-attached storage, flash memory, intelligent power distribution units, modular power supplies, display mounts, and web locator services. Gene also represents clients in trade secret, copyright, and trademark cases.

Gene received his undergraduate degree from Duke University and, prior to law school, worked as a bioanalyst at a major pharmaceutical company. He later earned his Juris Doctor at Washington University School of Law.

Eleanor D'Ambrosio

Eleanor combines policy and regulatory experience to provide clients with proactive and responsive counsel and advocacy in utility-related regulatory and business matters, helping them provide efficient and high-quality service to the public. Having served in the Texas Legislature and state agencies, Eleanor brings a strong track record of public policy to her private practice. Her experience as an attorney with the Public Utility Commission of Texas, most recently as Deputy Director of the Legal Division, informs her unique perspective on challenges in the state's utility regulatory environment.

Eleanor received her bachelor's degree from Brown University and earned her Juris Doctor at the University of Texas School of Law, during which she clerked in both the Administrative Law and Environmental Protection Divisions of the Texas Attorney General's Office.

Chase Fann

A passionate litigator with diverse experience in both civil and criminal law, Chase's focus areas span business, civil rights, contracts, criminal defense, employment, personal injury, and entertainment matters. This exposure to a wide range of practice areas allows him to serve as lead or co-counsel for plaintiffs and defendants in both state and federal courts at the trial and appellate level.

Chase completed his undergraduate studies at the University of Tennessee before earning his Juris Doctor at the Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law at the University of Memphis, where he finished second in his class. Prior to entering private practice, Chase served as an extern for the Honorable John T. Fowlkes, Jr. in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Tennessee and as an intern for the Davidson County District Attorney General's Office and the Honorable Julia S. Gibbons in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit.

Tara Holterhaus

A full-service litigation attorney, Tara focuses primarily on banking and financial services litigation, commercial litigation, real estate litigation, and bankruptcy litigation. Her clients include state and nationally chartered banks, non-bank lenders,

loan servicers, and debt collectors. Tara diligently defends her clients in a wide range of claims, including breach of contract, wrongful foreclosure, lien priority issues, and breach of financial documents such as promissory notes, guaranties, and lease agreements.

Recognizing the nuances in every matter, Tara works to understand her client's unique motivations and challenges by preparing strategies and using tools tailored to each case. After receiving her bachelor's degree from the University of Iowa, she earned her Juris Doctor at the University of Nebraska College of Law.

Paul Jacobson

Paul guides businesses through their environmental and workplace safety legal challenges involving the EPA, OSHA, state environmental and workplace safety agencies, and private third parties. In the environmental context, he helps companies understand and comply with federal and state requirements pursuant to the Clean Air Act, RCRA, CERCLA, Clean Water Act, and state corollaries. In the workplace safety context, he assists clients with all stages of OSHA inspections and enforcement, including OSH Review Commission litigation.

Paul attended St. Olaf College for his undergraduate studies before earning his Juris Doctor *magna cum laude* at the University of Missouri Columbia School of Law. Beyond private practice, Paul serves on the Board of Directors of the Midwest Section of the Air & Waste Management Association and regularly speaks and writes on environmental health and safety issues.

Kimberly Kerns

An accomplished litigator with more than 25 jury trials under her belt, Kim has a proven track record of defending insurance companies, construction companies, municipalities, design professionals, motor carriers, and individuals in first- and third-party lawsuits involving contract disputes and tort claims. She adeptly guides clients through all phases of litigation using her extensive courtroom experience to not only achieve favorable verdicts when trial becomes necessary, but to also coordinate favorable outcomes through dispositive motions and settlement.

After completing her undergraduate degree *cum laude* at The University of Texas at Dallas, Kim earned her Juris *Doctor cum laude* at Southern Methodist University's Dedman School of Law, where she competed on several mock trial teams. She remains dedicated to inspiring a new generation of trial attorneys by coaching high school mock trials.

Daniel Nelson

With vast experience in business law, prosecution, and case management, Dan offers clients creative and efficient counsel focused on complex, high-stakes litigation. He maintains an extensive track record of success in complex state and federal litigation and regulatory matters, often employing the full spectrum of dispute resolution methods.

Dan previously served as the Chief Deputy Prosecutor for Jackson County, Missouri, where he oversaw a prosecutor's office that annually resolved about 4,000 cases, including more than 60 jury trials per year. He also spent more than 12 years in federal prosecution as an Assistant U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, litigating many of the most complex federal white-collar cases.

Dan attended the University of Missouri for his bachelor's degree, graduating *magna cum laude*, before earning his Juris Doctor at the University of Virginia School of Law.

Serena O'Neil

With cultural competence at the core of her work, Serena maintains a person-centered estate planning practice in which she partners with her clients to create estate plans that put their wishes at the forefront. Just as every person is unique, she strongly believes that every client deserves a uniquely designed estate plan to fit their family, wealth, charitable, and business goals. Serena frequently works with high-net worth individuals and business owners to craft estate plans that meet their goals of business succession planning, tax planning, and charitable giving.

Serena graduated with her bachelor's degree from Wartburg College *summa cum laude*, then earned her Juris Doctor *magna cum laude* at the University of St. Thomas School of Law. In 2024, she earned her Master of Laws at Washington University in St. Louis.

John Peckler

John helps clients navigate complex development projects and real estate transactions, working with individuals, businesses, and developers on all aspects of land use and real estate law. Relying on his background in finance and experience with Colorado water law, he brings a unique perspective to understanding his clients' needs and finding solutions for each project that avoid or minimize delays and extra costs.

As land use counsel, John assists property owners and developers in applying for and obtaining approvals for new land use entitlements that facilitate the success of a project, helping clients anticipate and better manage land use, water, and other real estate issues and potential challenges. After receiving his bachelor's degree from the University of Colorado Boulder, John earned his Juris Doctor at the Lewis & Clark Law School.

Benjamin Shantz

A trial attorney and dedicated counselor recognized for practical legal advice, Ben fights for his clients' interests both in and out of the courtroom so they can focus on growing their businesses. When disputes do arise, he drafts a wide range of contracts to better position clients and protect their interests on the front-end. Ben focuses his practice on real estate and construction work helping owners, builders, and contractors navigate challenges throughout the development process.

Ben attended Duke University for his bachelor's degree, then earned his Juris Doctor at Washington University School of Law in St. Louis. He believes in giving back to his community and currently serves on several boards, including City Utilities of Springfield, the Springfield Community Land Trust, and the History Museum on the Square.

Scott Young

Scott is an experienced trial attorney who has tried cases in federal and state courts as well as argued appeals before federal and state appellate courts. His practice focuses on commercial and civil rights disputes. Scott is notably active in several prominent legal societies, previously serving as the president of the Utah Chapter of

the Federal Bar Association and the Utah Bar's Constitutional Law Section. He has presented to audiences across the nation, including several forums for federal judges, on the statistical analysis of judges.

After completing his undergraduate studies at Claremont McKenna College, Scott earned his Juris Doctor at Columbia Law School. Following, he served as a law clerk for the Honorable Dee Benson of the U.S. District Court for the District of Utah.