



Ten Attorneys Elected to Spencer Fane Partnership in 2026

Spencer Fane LLP is pleased to announce 10 new attorneys have been elected to the partnership in 2026, underscoring the firm's longstanding commitment to growing leaders from within as a core pillar of its approach to professional development and client service. The new partners include [Jose Antonio Castro](#) (Denver), [Matthew Cox](#) (Salt Lake City), [Joseph Hunt](#) (Kansas City), [Will Kelly](#) (Phoenix), [Amy Mitchell](#) (Houston), [Kristen O'Neal](#) (Springfield), [Matthew O'Connor](#) (Phoenix), [Blake Smith](#) (Kansas City), [Lisa Tracy](#) (Santa Monica), and [Valentine Uduebor](#) (Plano).

"In our sustained efforts to broaden and deepen our client service offerings, we look forward to the value these new partners will add to their respective industries, and we congratulate them on reaching a milestone that reflects their commitment to intentional, ongoing professional development," said Spencer Fane Chair [Patrick J. Whalen](#). "As we enter the new year, we look forward to the many ways in which their work will meet evolving needs within modern business and legal landscapes while also making meaningful contributions to the communities they serve."

Meet each of the firm's newest partners below.

[Jose Antonio Castro](#)

As a full-service litigator, Jose represents public, private, and corporate clients in all their litigation and land use permitting needs. He specializes in various forms of litigation related to real estate, focusing on land use actions, condemnation issues, and easement disputes, and also assists clients in navigating land use and zoning permitting procedures established by different municipalities and agencies. Externally, he holds multiple leadership positions within the American Bar Association, including his roles as a Standing Committee on Election Law Fellow, Young Lawyers

Division Administrative Director, and Delegate.

Jose completed his undergraduate studies at the University of Nebraska and earned his Juris Doctor from the University of Wisconsin Law School. After, he spent two years clerking for the Honorable Timothy M. Witkowiak at the First Judicial Circuit Court of Wisconsin in Milwaukee.

Matthew Cox

Matt represents financial institutions and other lenders in efforts to protect their collateral and loan rights in federal and state courts, including bankruptcy courts. He focuses on defending these lenders and other clients against avoidance, preference, and fraudulent transfer claims made by trustees and receivers, and also assists creditors in obtaining relief from the bankruptcy automatic stay and in prosecuting objections to confirmation.

Notably, Matt devoted nearly a decade to the C.W. Mining Bankruptcy case, defending dozens of trustee preference, fraudulent transfer, and other avoidance actions, with total damages in excess of \$45 million. He completed both his bachelor's degree and Juris Doctor at the University of Utah. Outside of the firm, he is involved in several legal organizations and serves on the Ronald McDonald House Charities Board of Directors, where he is a former board chair and was previously honored with Board Volunteer of the Year.

Joseph Hunt

An experienced business partner and go-to attorney for labor and employment matters, Joe has a track record of success representing employers across the country in complex labor and employment disputes. He advises management and human resources personnel on all aspects of the employment relationship and counsels nationally known clients, as well as small and midsize businesses, regarding background checks, drug testing, employment contracts, restrictive covenants, wage and hour issues, anti-discrimination statutes, and labor relations.

Joe obtained his undergraduate degree from Yale University before earning his Juris Doctor at the University of Denver Sturm College of Law. Beyond private practice, he is an active member of the Colorado Bar Association, holding various leadership

positions throughout the years, and frequently presents and organizes conferences on labor and employment topics and developments in Colorado law.

Will Kelly

Experienced at handling all aspects of intellectual property law, Will's practice places an emphasis on preparing and prosecuting foreign and domestic patent applications for software and information technology. In addition, he assists clients by contributing to open-source online programming projects and helping to beta-test independently developed online software.

Will graduated *cum laude* with a computer science degree from the University of Arizona, where he gained in-depth knowledge of computer networking, databases, operating systems, and programming techniques which he applies to his current practice. He then earned his Juris Doctor *cum laude* from the University of Georgia School of Law.

Amy Mitchell

Amy represents clients through a wide range of litigation matters, including personal injury, construction defect, oil and gas, commercial litigation, shareholder disputes, class actions, multiparty death cases, and appeals. During nearly four decades as an attorney, she has handled more than 3,000 litigation cases and successfully tried over 80 trials.

After obtaining her bachelor's degree from the State University of New York at Oneonta, Amy earned her Juris Doctor from Case Western Reserve University. Beyond private practice, she is heavily involved in several community groups, including the Central Fort Bend Chamber Alliance, Fort Bend Chamber of Commerce, and Exchange of Sugar Land. She is also a certified arbitrator by the American Arbitration Association and the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority.

Kristen O'Neal

A skilled litigator capable of handling cases from intake to conclusion, Kristen approaches every matter with the mindset that it will ultimately go to trial. Supported by more than a decade of legal experience, she manages discovery, handles depositions, drafts and argues effective motions, negotiates resolutions, and tries

cases to jury verdicts for a wide range of health care, education, trucking and auto, and insurance industry clients. She has notable experience representing individuals and entities before the Missouri Commission of Human Rights, Missouri Department of Education, and Missouri Board of Healing Arts.

Kristen worked as a substitute teacher and assistant high school softball coach while completing her undergraduate studies in secondary education at Southwest Baptist University, experience which informs her work representing public schools. Following, she earned her Juris Doctor from the University of Missouri–Kansas City School of Law.

Matthew O'Connor

Matt counsels individuals, companies, developers, builders, property owners, and financial institutions on all aspects of real estate transactions, accounting for all stakeholders to maximize efficiency and value for clients in the process. He brings vast experience in leasing, finance, asset acquisition and disposition, portfolio acquisitions, 1031 exchanges, condemnation and easements, and leveraged transactions on both the buy and sell sides, with representations in more than \$500 million worth of commercial real estate. This includes working with individual investors, private equity groups, and REITs.

After completing his undergraduate degree *cum laude* at Trinity University, Matt earned his Juris Doctor from Arizona State University's Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law. Prior to entering private practice, he completed an externship with the Honorable John C. Gemmill of the Arizona Court of Appeals.

Blake Smith

With a focus on securities, corporate governance, restrictive covenants, and intellectual property, Blake regularly represents founders and executives, early-stage or established companies, registered investment advisors, private funds, trustees, and lenders. He also advises on transactional and regulatory matters that fall within these focus areas. Because his matters often require extensive pre-dispute investigation, he helps structure and commence internal investigations on behalf of corporate clients to assess the cost and benefits of bringing or resolving claims.

Blake obtained his bachelor's degree from the University of Missouri before earning his Juris Doctor *magna cum laude* from the University of Missouri–Kansas City School of Law.

Lisa Tracy

Lisa has extensive experience in civil litigation in both state and federal courts, primarily focusing on real estate, housing, and construction. Her experience includes bad faith litigation and insurance coverage matters. She has represented foreign and domestic excess and surplus line insurers and reinsurers in a wide variety of complex third-party and first-party coverage disputes. In addition, she has experience in defending habitability cases and employment practices cases, including claims for wrongful termination, discrimination, sexual harassment, and retaliation.

Lisa completed her bachelor's degree at California State University, Northridge, then earned her Juris Doctor from Loyola Law School.

Valentine Uduebor

Valentine focuses on complex insurance coverage and first-party disputes, including breach of contract and bad faith matters, with an emphasis on high-exposure property and casualty claims. He regularly advises clients on novel and complex coverage issues and works closely with stakeholders to develop practical, risk-averse strategies aimed at resolving disputes efficiently and avoiding unnecessary litigation. He has also served as national trial counsel and coordinating counsel for insurance carriers, including excess and surplus lines insurers, in high-stakes litigation across multiple jurisdictions.

Within the firm, Valentine serves as the BOND Committee Chair. Externally, he is involved in multiple legal associations and is an associate board member for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Colorado. After completing his undergraduate studies at the University of North Texas, he earned his Juris Doctor from William & Mary Law School.