



SpencerFane®

John G. Willard

Partner

Contact

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Overview

John Willard advises clients in complex financial transactions and corporate restructurings, carefully tailoring his diverse legal acumen to meet unique business objectives. His professional background in entertainment, finance, business, and international transactions has made him a versatile counselor for a wide array of clients and organizations, from the world's largest neurosurgical society to the historical trust of a former U.S. President.

Within his dynamic practice, John represents domestic and international financial institutions and corporate borrowers in financings related to the media and entertainment, real estate, manufacturing, technology, and retail industries. He has also represented both financiers and borrowers in complex syndicated loan transactions, mergers and acquisitions, real estate developments, recapitalizations, working capital loans, spinoffs, and debt restructurings.

In addition, John advises corporate and financial institutions on bankruptcy and creditor's rights issues. His extensive experience in this area includes representing numerous debtor companies in Chapter 11 reorganizations, including domestic and international retailers and energy companies, highly regulated institutions, bank holding companies, and liquidating trusts.

Prior to earning his Juris Doctor, John worked on both the talent and corporate sides of leading entertainment studios in Los Angeles, gaining a multifaceted industry understanding which has informed his legal work with his media and entertainment clients, including Academy Award-winning artists.

John maintains a considerable international client reach and is notably bilingual in Spanish.

Education

- Saint Louis University, 2014 (J.D.)
- Rhodes College (B.A.)
- University of Salamanca – Spain, 2005

Bar Admissions

- Missouri
- New York

Court Admissions

- U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri
- U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Eastern District of Missouri

Community Involvement

- USS Gerald R. Ford Ship Sponsor Advisory Committee
- Aim High St. Louis, Legal Leader Board
- Loyola Academy of St. Louis, Junior Board of Directors
- Young Friends of the Saint Louis Art Museum
- National Multiple Sclerosis Society,
 - Corporate Achievers Campaign, 2015
- Louis Volunteer Lawyers & Accountants for the Arts
- St. Louis Criminal Justice Ministry, 2014–2015

Distinctions

- Lawdragon, 500 Leading Global Bankruptcy & Restructuring Lawyers, 2024, 2025
- *Missouri & Kansas Super Lawyers*, Rising Star, 2022–2024
- *Best Lawyers in America*, One to Watch, Bankruptcy and Creditor Debtor Rights / Insolvency and Reorganization Law, 2021–2025; Real Estate Law, 2021–2025; Banking and Finance Law, 2024–2025

Memberships

- Bar Association of Metropolitan St. Louis
- The Missouri Bar
- The New York Bar
- American Bankruptcy Institute
- INSOL International

Related Experience

- Serving as co-counsel to a specialty footwear retailer and its related debtor affiliates in Chapter 11 restructuring and post-bankruptcy proceedings. Client is the largest specialty family footwear retailer in the Western Hemisphere with nearly 4,400 stores across more than 30 countries.
- Serving as co-counsel to a leading producer of thermal coal and 30 affiliated debtors in Chapter 11 bankruptcy proceedings in the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Eastern District of Missouri.
- Served as counsel to the world's largest neurosurgical society in connection with the development and deployment of an AI-based medical chatbot.
- Represented national hotel chain (150+ hotels) in Spirit Airlines, Inc.'s Chapter 11 bankruptcy.

- Represented leading U.S. and Swedish energy storage developer in out-of-court restructuring of nine-figure multi-currency credit facilities.
- Served as lead counsel to global manufacturing company on \$85 million cross-border (U.S., U.K., Netherlands, Taiwan, Germany, and Australia) acquisition financing.
- Served as borrower's counsel to an international meat exporter having operations in the U.S., Mexico, and Colombia on its eight-figure, cross-border, senior secured asset-based revolving credit facility.
- Served as U.S. obligors' counsel to a leading London-based e-commerce business on the restructuring of its multicurrency debt facility from a British multinational bank.
- Served as lead counsel to an international bank on a multimillion-dollar (U.S. and Canadian dollars), cross-border, senior secured loan.
- Advised an international investment banking firm in connection with the Rule 2.7 announcement for the recommended cash offer by a leading pricing and analytics solution for the entire issued, and to be issued, ordinary share capital of a British financial technology company to be affected by means of a scheme of arrangement under Part 26 of the Companies Act 2006 (Acquisition).
- Advised a national independent enterprise risk management agency on completion of \$30 million in private equity financing. In connection with the financing, advised client on formation and capitalization of a specialty brokerage and investment banking platform offering insurance solutions to public and private companies and private equity sponsors.
- Served as borrower's counsel on a \$46 million real estate loan secured by a 312-unit multifamily residential development.
- Served as counsel to a global consulting firm in the bankruptcy proceedings of one of the world's largest toy retailers.
- Served as co-counsel to the largest private-sector coal company in the world in its Chapter 11 bankruptcy proceedings.
- Served as financier's counsel on a \$35 million movie production financing.
- Served as borrower's counsel on a \$50 million real estate construction loan.
- Represented client in a recapitalization transaction which included the client's holding company and all its affiliates.
- Served as co-counsel to a privately held coal company in its Chapter 11 bankruptcy proceedings.
- Obtained dismissal of environmental claims against a client in the energy industry. Because the lawsuit in question was filed after the client filed its Chapter 11 reorganization plan, the U.S. Bankruptcy Court granted the client's motion to enforce the release and injunction provisions in the confirmed plan. As a result, the court dismissed the causes of action with prejudice.
- Served as counsel to the borrower, an international scrap metal processor, with respect to a \$180 million syndicated credit facility.
- Served as counsel to the liquidating trustee of a mining and metallurgy company following the company's Chapter 11 bankruptcy proceedings.