SpencerFane®

Kristen M. O'Neal

Partner

Contact

Springfield

P 417.888.1025 | **F** 417.881.8035

koneal@spencerfane.com



Overview

Kristen O'Neal is a seasoned litigator who brings a unique advantage to the defense of trucking and transportation claims through her extensive medical malpractice experience. Her background working with complex medical records, causation issues, and high-stakes injury claims allows her to quickly analyze medical evidence, identify gaps in claimed damages, and challenge causation theories others might overlook. Kristen also leverages a deep network of medical experts developed through her malpractice work to strengthen the defense of catastrophic injury and wrongful death cases arising from trucking accidents. She represents motor carriers, owner-operators, shippers, freight forwarders, and brokers nationwide, providing strategic guidance from early claim investigation through litigation, as well as contract drafting and review, federal regulatory compliance, safety and training guidance, and related operational matters.

Kristen brings practical insight informed by her active involvement in industry organizations. Her practice reflects a deep commitment to advocating for the transportation industry and the businesses that drive it. With deep industry knowledge, she takes the time to fully understand each client's business structure, operations, and personnel. This approach allows her to respond quickly, efficiently, and strategically – delivering practical solutions that align with her clients' operational and business goals.

In addition to her transportation practice, Kristen maintains a robust litigation practice, handling complex matters for a diverse client base, including construction companies, auto parts retailers, insurance companies and their insureds, hospitals and health care providers, public school districts, attorneys, and other professionals. While most cases resolve before trial, her approach – preparing every case as if it will be tried – positions clients to achieve the strongest possible outcomes, whether through negotiation or in the courtroom.

Kristen brings a practical, results-oriented approach to every matter while always looking outside the box to develop innovative, client-focused solutions that align with both legal and business objectives. Her track record of success spans matters involving:

- Transportation related claims, such as helping clients navigate and manage claims, investigate accidents, and negotiating to resolve claims both in and out of court all over the nation
- Personal injury and wrongful death claims
- Employment matters related to discrimination, retaliation, contract disputes, and separation
- Professional negligence, including attorney, physician, and hospital negligence
- Representation of individuals and entities before administrative entities, such as the Missouri Commission of Human Rights, Missouri Department of Education, and Missouri Board of Healing Arts
- Student discrimination and constitutional issues
- Declaratory judgments, subrogation, and interpleader actions

Kristen comes from a family of educators and worked as a substitute teacher and assistant high school coach while completing her undergraduate studies in secondary education, a background that shapes her communication style, work ethic, and practical approach to problem-solving. She also maintains close ties to her family's farm, experience that gives her firsthand insight into challenges facing small businesses. Together, these experiences inform her ability to communicate effectively and deliver practical, business-focused legal solutions to her clients.

Education

- University of Missouri - Kansas City School of Law, 2012 (J.D.)
- Southwest Baptist University, 2009 (B.S.)

Bar Admissions

- Kansas
- Missouri

Court Admissions

- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit
- U.S. District Court for the Western District of Missouri
- U.S. District Court for the District of Kansas
- U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Tennessee

Distinctions

- *Missouri Lawyers Media*, Women's Justice Award, Litigation Practitioner, 2025
- *Missouri and Kansas Super Lawyers*, Rising Stars, 2018-2025
- *Missouri Lawyers Media*, Top Defense Verdicts & Settlements, two cases recognized, 2020

Memberships

- Trucking Industry Defense Association
- American Truckers United
- Missouri Bar Association
- Missouri Trucking Association
- Springfield Metropolitan Bar Association

- Missouri Organization of Defense Lawyers
- Southern Missouri Women Lawyers

Presentations and Publications

- "FMCSA: Reinforcing Existing Rules and Introducing New Standards," Trucking Industry Defense Association Annual Seminar, October 2026
- "It's one, two, three strikes you're out….Spring Personnel Decisions for Certified Personnel," Missouri Association of Rural Education
- "Limitations on Working After Retirement: It's Not Just for Employees Anymore," Missouri Association of Rural Education
- "Disciplining Staff in Light of Missouri's New Whistle Blower Protections," Missouri Association of Rural Education K-8 Conference, Education Law Update, UMKC CLE Program
- "Damages – Do You Know the New Rules?" Springfield Metropolitan Bar Association, Webinar, September 2020

Related Experience

- Achieved a successful defense verdict while representing a trucking company in a wrongful death action arising out of a tractor-trailer accident.
- Achieved a successful defense verdict while representing a physician in a medical malpractice action brought by a patient who alleged negligence neurosurgery with use of bone morphogenic protein. Punitive damages were sought.
- Upheld motion to dismiss for lack of personal jurisdiction in the Missouri Court of Appeals for the Southern District.
- Obtained summary judgment upheld by 10th Circuit for school district and administrators by employee who alleged discrimination and retaliation.
- Obtained summary judgment for a health care provider following 2017 changes to Chapter 538 related to vicarious liability.