

DETROIT

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Services

Litigation and Dispute Resolution
Commercial and Corporate
Litigation
Intellectual Property
Intellectual Property Litigation
International
Canada

Industries

Higher Education
K-12 Education
Next Generation Vehicles and
Mobility

Education

University of Windsor School of
Law, LL.B., 2005
University of Detroit Mercy Law
School, J.D., 2005
Wilfrid Laurier University, BBA
2002

Bar Admissions

Michigan

Court Admissions

U.S. District Court
• Eastern District of Michigan
Court of Appeal for Ontario



Joseph G. Vernon

Of Counsel

Joseph G. Vernon is an experienced commercial litigator, business lawyer, and sports lawyer.

Joe has served as lead counsel for commercial litigation clients in arbitration proceedings, in state and federal courts across the country, and before several courts of appeal, in complex commercial contract, intellectual property, trade secret, shareholder oppression, fraud and civil RICO, and automotive supplier disputes.

Joe also acts as general litigation and outside counsel for several clients, has conducted numerous internal investigations, and is frequently consulted on key strategic initiatives, all of which are a testament to his commitment to understanding his clients' needs, objectives and the industries in which they operate.

Joe's background as a varsity athlete in college and law school provide a natural foundation for the work he's done in the sports field, which includes representing and advising athletes, coaches and front-office personnel in contract negotiations and related disputes. He is also an accomplished writer in the field, and is often asked to comment on new and emerging issues.

Joe is deeply involved in the community as well. He has served on the Detroit Economic Club's Young Leaders Board and as a mentor in its Career Readiness Academy. He also serves on the Board of Mariners Inn, a rehabilitation and homeless shelter. He serves on the Executive Board of the Federal Bar Association's Eastern District of Michigan Chapter, and co-chairs its Rules and Civil Practice Committee. He previously served as an adjunct professor at Detroit Mercy Law School, where he taught an advanced legal writing and oral advocacy course.

Joseph G. Vernon

In 2019, he was invited to give the commencement address to Detroit Mercy Law School graduates.

Representative Matters

- Successfully prosecuted in U.S. federal court an \$80 million contract dispute between a Canadian agricultural company and its American joint venturer, obtaining an injunction preventing the transfer of assets to a third party.
- Successfully defended a Canadian manufacturer—defeating an injunction motion and obtaining summary disposition—in a trade secrets case filed in U.S. state court.
- Successfully defended an American automotive supplier in a dispute filed in Ontario by its sub-supplier and alleging breaches of various production contracts.
- Successfully prosecuted in U.S. state court a contract dispute between a New Zealand manufacturer and a Canadian agricultural company relating to machinery supplied in British Columbia, obtaining summary disposition on affirmative claims and counterclaims and recovering attorney fees.
- Successfully defended a Canadian software company in a contract and warranty dispute filed by an American transportation company in U.S. state court, obtaining dismissal of all claims.
- Successfully defended a Canadian steel supplier in a dispute filed by an American manufacturer in U.S. federal court, obtaining dismissal of all claims.
- Successfully prosecuted a collection action in U.S. federal court on behalf of a Canadian genetics company and its American customer, obtaining summary disposition on all claims.

Multinational Manufacturer Trademark and Unfair Competition Litigation

Successfully represented a multinational manufacturer in a trademark dispute against a former employee who was misappropriating trademarks as part of a bait and switch scheme, obtaining judgment against the former employee and a permanent injunction enjoining the wrongful activities.

Food Distributor Trademark Litigation

Successfully represented a high-end food distributor in a trademark dispute with a competitor relating to the competitor's trademark infringement and false designation of origin of goods.

Software Manufacturer Class Action Defense

Successfully defended a software manufacturer in class action litigation filed by restaurant franchisees.

Software Manufacturer IP and Commercial Tort Litigation

Successfully defended a software manufacturer against breach of contract claims while prosecuting, to a favorable resolution, counterclaims for misappropriation of trade secrets, unfair competition, and tortious interference with business relationships.

Automotive Supplier Warranty Litigation

Successfully represented a multinational automotive supplier in a \$50 million warranty dispute.

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Digital Media Company Copyright Litigation

Successfully represented a digital media company in a copyright dispute with a television network and a multinational alcohol distributor relating to the use of copyrighted materials in an advertising campaign.

Canadian Manufacturer Commercial Litigation in U.S.

Successfully defended a Canadian manufacturer in a dispute with a steel supplier in U.S. federal court.

Canadian Manufacturer Sales Commission Litigation in U.S.

Reached a favorable conclusion on behalf of a Canadian manufacturer in a dispute in U.S. federal court over millions of dollars in allegedly unpaid sales commissions.

Health Provider Commercial Litigation

Reached a favorable resolution on behalf of a medical services provider in a breach of contract dispute with former medical billing company.

Canadian Company Commercial Litigation in U.S.

Successfully defended a Canadian waste management company in a breach of contract dispute in U.S. court.

Security Company Commercial Litigation

Successfully represented a security company in a contract dispute with multiple commercial entities.

Canadian Company Commercial Litigation in Ontario

Successfully represented a Canadian clothing designer in a contract dispute in an Ontario court with a former consultant, obtaining judgment against the consultant.

Manufacturers Sales Commission Litigation

Represented multiple U.S. based manufacturers in sales commissions disputes filed in Michigan.

Premises Liability Litigation

Handled a portfolio of premises liability cases on behalf of a national retailer, resulting primarily in summary dismissals.

Professional Athlete Contract Representation

Represents professional athletes, in securing employment and negotiating contract terms.

Entertainer Venue Contracts

Negotiates the terms of performance and venue contracts on behalf of singers, musicians, and performance venues.

Athlete and Entertainer Intellectual Property Advisor

Advises artists, singers, musicians, and athletes on various intellectual property issues.

Entertainer Copyright Protection

Represents musicians in copyright disputes with record companies and other musicians.

Campaign Volunteer Contract Dispute Litigation and Appeal

After obtaining summary dismissal of contract claims brought by campaign volunteers against former political candidate, successfully represented client before the Michigan Court of Appeals, who affirmed the trial court's decision.

Joseph G. Vernon

Automotive Supplier Litigation and Appeal

After obtaining summary dismissal of claims brought by an automotive supplier against another automotive supplier, briefed appellate response leading opposing party to dismiss the appeal.

Real Estate Purchaser Appeal

After the trial court granted summary disposition and issued an injunction in favor of a homeowners' association against a purchaser, successfully represented purchaser before the Michigan Court of Appeals, who reversed and remanded.

Teaching

University of Detroit Mercy School of Law, Visiting Professor, Advanced Legal Theory and Analysis

Honors

The Fellows of the Michigan State Bar Foundation

Best Lawyers in America, Commercial Litigation, 2021-present

DBusiness Magazine, Top Lawyers, Trade Secrets & Commercial Litigation, 2020-present

State Bar of Michigan Pro Bono Honor Roll, 2020-present

Crain's Detroit Business, 40 Under 40, 2018

Michigan Super Lawyers, "Rising Star," Business Litigation, 2009-2019

University of Windsor Faculty of Law/University of Detroit-Mercy School of Law, Recent Alumnus Award of Excellence, 2008

University of Windsor Faculty of Law

Golden Lancer Award

Lancers Varsity Football

Wilfrid Laurier University

Honours Business

Golden Hawks Varsity Football

St. Michael's College School

Honours Society

Kerry Blues Football Team Captain

Footsteps Scholarship presented by Michael "Pinball" Clemons, 1998

Joseph G. Vernon

Professional Activities

American Bar Association, Forum on the Entertainment and Sports Industries

Federal Bar Association, Rules and Civil Practice Committee; Eastern District of Michigan Chapter Executive Board

State Bar of Michigan, Arts Communications Entertainment and Sports (ACES) Section

Sports Lawyers Association

Law Society of Upper Canada

Ontario Bar Association

Detroit Regional Chamber's Leadership Detroit, Class XXXVII

Civic, Cultural & Social Activities

Mariners Inn, Board of Directors

Detroit Economic Club, Young Leaders Board & Career Readiness Academy Mentor

Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan Transition Team, Ethics Committee Co-Chair, 2013-2014

Big Brothers of Windsor & Essex County, Board of Directors, 2007-2008

Lancers Touchdown Club, President, 2006-2010

Speeches

Commencement Speaker, St. Michael's College School, June 2022

Commencement Speaker, University of Detroit Mercy Law School, May 2019

"Contracts 101: Know What You Are Getting and Getting What You Want," Techstars Detroit Startup Week, June 2018, Detroit, Michigan

"Enforcing Foreign Judgments in Ontario and Michigan," Bridging the Detroit River: Emerging Issues in Defending Civil Litigation, Canadian Defence Lawyers and Michigan Defense Trial Counsel, March 2015, Windsor, Ontario

"Valuing Your Commercial Contract Case," Institute of Continuing Legal Education Webinar, July 2014, Ann Arbor, Michigan

"Player Representation and Team Management," Windsor Law Sports & Entertainment Conference, March 2013, Windsor, Ontario

Joseph G. Vernon

"The Art of Negotiation," Windsor Law Sports & Entertainment Conference, February 2015, Windsor, Ontario

"Doing Business in Canada," Automation Alley, April 2009, Troy, Michigan

"Contract Law: Ensuring That You Get What You Want From Your Relationships With Key Stakeholders," International Black Expo, May 2007, Detroit, Michigan

Publications

"Nike strikes back against Kawhi Leonard over logo lawsuit," Published by Sportsnet.ca, July 19, 2019

"The King of the North v. Nike: Inside Kawhi Leonard's legal battle," Published by Sportsnet.ca, June 7, 2019

Articles

Nike Strikes Back Against Kawhi Leonard Over Logo Lawsuit

Michigan Supreme Court Approves Significant Changes to Michigan Court Rules Effective January 1, 2020

The King of the North v. Nike: A Clash Over Valuable IP Rights

FALSE START ON THE OFFENSE- Why the 5th Circuit Flagged the NFLPA for Illegal Procedure in the Ezekiel Elliott Case

Is it Time for Athletes to Demand Reciprocal Morals Clauses in Their Endorsement Deals?

Nike Voluntarily Dismisses Closely Watched Lawsuit Against Olympic Hopeful