

GRAND RAPIDS

99 Monroe Ave. NW
Suite 1200
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503
T: +1.616.776.6317
O: +1.616.454.8656
F: +1.616.776.6322

CHICAGO

227 West Monroe St.
Suite 3600
Chicago, Illinois 60606
O: +1.312.460.4200
F: +1.312.460.4201

TRAVERSE CITY

202 East State St.
Suite 201
Traverse City, Michigan 49684
O: +1.231.454.3160
F: +1.231.454.3161

ragatzki@millercanfield.com

Services

Litigation and Dispute Resolution
Appeals
Commercial and Corporate
Litigation

Industries

Craft Beverage Manufacturers

Education

Michigan State University College
of Law, J.D. 2017
Michigan State University, B.S.,
2012

Bar Admissions

Illinois
Michigan

Court Admissions

U.S. Court of Appeals
• Sixth Circuit



Stephen M. Ragatzki

Principal

Steve Ragatzki is a commercial litigator who specializes in making complex concepts simple to understand. He frequently helps clients in industries regulated by the Food and Drug Administration, Securities and Exchange Commission, Michigan Liquor Control Commission, and Michigan Public Service Commission protect their business interests. Whether it is a business partner that complains a drug was not manufactured according to FDA standards, a former employee who walks out the door and takes clients and trade secrets, or an alcohol manufacturer suffering from overregulation by its local government, Steve prioritizes clarity and brevity to cut to the heart of the issue.

His practice extends beyond traditional breach of contract matters. Steve regularly defends businesses against tort claims like gas explosions and slip and falls. He has helped utility companies use eminent domain to secure easements to lay miles of natural gas pipelines in southeast Michigan. And he has assisted clients in recovering hundreds of thousands of dollars in construction litigation disputes. No matter the type of case, Steve prioritizes telling a clear and understandable story to the judge and jury.

Steve previously completed a federal clerkship with the Honorable Richard F. Suhrheinrich of the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit. While in law school, Steve was the Editor-in-Chief of the Michigan State International Law Review and completed the two-year Trial Practice Institute Program. Before attending law school, Steve taught Algebra II and chemistry and coached varsity baseball as a Teach for America corps member in Chicago, Illinois.

Stephen M. Ragatzki

- Ninth Circuit
- U.S. District Courts
 - Western District of Michigan
 - Eastern District of Michigan
 - Southern District of Indiana

Representative Matters

§1983 Litigation

- Represented the Wineries of the Old Mission Peninsula Association and 11 wineries in a lawsuit against Peninsula Township, Michigan. The district court concluded that Peninsula Township's zoning ordinance violated the First Amendment, the Due Process Clause, and the Dormant Commerce Clause and that it was preempted by the Michigan Liquor Control Code. Following a 10-day trial, the district court awarded the wineries \$49 million in damages for their lost profits.

Zoning Litigation

- Represented Michigan winery in lawsuit over northern Michigan township's interpretation of the winery's special use permit and township's violations of the Michigan Open Meetings Act. A successful summary disposition motion ultimately led to consent judgment in favor of the winery to clarify allowed uses under its special use permit.

Alcohol Litigation

- Successfully represented alcohol manufacturer in multi-million-dollar lawsuit filed by wholesalers over issue of first impression of the terms "brand" and "brand extension" under the Michigan Liquor Control Code. The district court agreed with our interpretation of the law and dismissed the case. *Capitol Beverage Co., Inc. v. Hornell Brewing Co., Inc.*, No. 1:24-CV-986, 2025 WL 1427094 (W.D. Mich. Apr. 24, 2025).

Breach of Contract Litigation

- Successfully enforced a non-compete agreement against former employees who left a pharmaceutical manufacturer and took documents to new employer.
- Successfully represented a financial advisory firm to enforce a non-compete and confidentiality agreement against a former employee.
- Successfully represented a local business to enforce a non-compete agreement against a former employee. Matter resulted in a preliminary injunction and a money judgment against the former employee.
- Successfully represented a local manufacturing company in a breach of contract claim against a parts manufacturer. Representation resulted in a \$239,000 judgment against the parts manufacturer.

Stephen M. Ragatzki

Construction Litigation

- Successfully defended a homeowner against claims made by a contractor. Settlement resulted in a dismissal of all claims against the client, lien removed from homeowner's residence, and no damages owed.
- Successfully defended a California subcontractor and its employee in federal court against breach of contract and conversion claims by a Michigan general contractor. The claims were dismissed for lack of personal jurisdiction, lack of subject matter jurisdiction, and failure to state a claim. *Lee Contracting, Inc. v. Shore W. Mfg.*, No. 1:19-CV-831, 2020 WL 6193628, at *1 (W.D. Mich. Oct. 22, 2020).
- Represented homeowners against their general contractor for claims for breach of contract and conversion. Successful settlement for homeowners after general contract admitted under oath to falsifying sworn statements.
- Represented a business owner against its general contractor, resulting in successful settlement for business owner.

Tort Defense

- Successfully defended gas station and received summary judgment of trip and fall claim on elevated sidewalk. *Sherman v. Speedway LLC*, No. 1:21-CV-63, 2022 WL 22248553 (W.D. Mich. July 28, 2022). Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed the grant of summary judgment. *Sherman v. Speedway, LLC*, No. 22-1545, 2023 WL 2870721 (6th Cir. Apr. 10, 2023).
- Successfully defended gas station and received full dismissal of slip and fall claim on snow and ice. *Lewis v. Speedway LLC*, No. 1:20-CV-1166, 2021 WL 6932967 (W.D. Mich. Dec. 1, 2021).
- Defended utility company after natural gas fire destroyed a historic building. Following discovery that showed holes in the plaintiff's theory of causation for the fire, the parties reached a successful settlement for the utility company.
- Defended utility company after natural gas exploded inside a residence. Following discovery, the parties reached a successful settlement for the utility company.

Administrative Challenges

- Represented large chemical manufacturer challenging chemical-limit standards set by state agency. Michigan Court of Claims and Court of Appeals ruled to invalidate the standards because the state agency failed to follow the Administrative Procedures Act.

Teaching

Teach for America, Math & Science, Chicago Public Schools, 2012-2013; Noble Network of Charter Schools; 2013-2014

Honors

Best Lawyers: Ones to Watch, Commercial Litigation, 2023-present

Stephen M. Ragatzki

Grand Rapids Magazine, Top Lawyers, Commercial Litigation, 2025

Michigan Lawyers Weekly, Up & Coming Lawyer, 2025

State Bar of Michigan Pro Bono Honor Roll, 2021, 2024-2025

Summa cum laude, Michigan State University Law School

Civic, Cultural & Social Activities

Parish Finance Council, St. John/St. Thomas Aquinas Parish, Member 2014-2017

Publications

"Lavender and red tape: Farm in Thumb fighting township restrictions," Detroit Free Press (February 22, 2026)

"A Northern MI township of 6,000 residents must pay \$50 million in wineries lawsuit," Michigan Public (August 10, 2025)

Filling in the Gaps in FAA Drone Regulations: A Proposed Dual-Zone Model of Personal Privacy, 25 Mich. St. Int'l L. Rev. 193 (2017)

Resolving the Reasonable Belief and Probable Cause Circuit Split Stemming from Payton and Steagald, 20 U. Pa. J. Const. L. Online 1 (2017)