StradleyRonon

Michael J. Wise

Associate

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Michael Wise is a litigator representing institutional and other clients in complex commercial matters and disputes spanning multiple industry sectors. Clients rely on Michael to strategically analyze and address the legal disputes affecting their businesses in a practical and thoughtful manner.

Michael is well versed in representing public and private companies, nonprofit organizations and governmental entities in a broad spectrum of cases, including mass torts, class action defense, premises liability claims, construction disputes, general liability defense, trusts and estates disputes, and bond and indemnity claims. Though his practice spans a diverse range of industries, Michael brings a tailored approach to each case to help clients navigate disputes from inception to resolution before state and federal courts, arbitral forums and regulatory agencies.

Michael is also a member of the firm's e-discovery team, helping develop cost-effective strategies for the preservation, collection, analysis and production of electronically stored information.

At Rutgers Law School, Michael was staff editor for the *Rutgers University Law Review*. Prior to becoming a lawyer, Michael served as an infantry sergeant in the New Jersey Army National Guard and completed a yearlong deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Featured Representative Matters

- Secured an appellate victory on behalf of the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue in the Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania related to the denial of a $26 million tax refund claim brought by the estate of a Pittsburgh billionaire and Mellon family heir.

Memberships

- Pennsylvania Bar Association
- New Jersey Bar Association
- Camden County Bar Association
- Stradley Ronon Technology Committee

Services

- Appellate
- Complex Commercial & Class Action Litigation
- Construction
- E-Discovery Team
- Insurance & Reinsurance
- Litigation
- Products Liability & Mass Tort Defense
- Religious, Educational & Nonprofit Organizations
- Trial Practice

Education

- Rutgers University School of Law – Camden (J.D., *cum laude*)
- The College of New Jersey (B.S.)

Admissions

- Pennsylvania
- New Jersey
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit

Recognitions

- *Pennsylvania Super Lawyers* (Rising Star: Business Litigation) (2024-26)

Clerkships

- Clerkship to Judge Richard Wells of the New Jersey Superior Court, Law Division (2016-17)
- Clerkship to Judge William Nugent of the New Jersey Superior Court, Appellate Division (2017-18)

Experience

Stradley Ronon Secures Appellate Win in Denial of $26M Tax Refund by Billionaire's Estate

Stradley Ronon obtained a victory on behalf of the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue in a matter involving a $29 million inheritance tax refund claim brought by the estate of an heir of the Mellon family. In *Estate of Richard M. Scaife v. Pennsylvania*, Pittsburgh billionaire Richard Scaife's estate claimed a $29 million deduction from the Commonwealth based on a prior $200 million settlement with Scaife's children (and certain legal fees and other administrative expenses). The estate argued that the trustee indemnification agreements executed in conjunction with Scaife's receipt of more than $400 million in trust fund distributions were "bona fide" agreements and therefore the settlement amount was an estate expense that was tax-deductible.

A three-judge panel of the Commonwealth Court ruled the conflicts of interest regarding Scaife's lawyer — who was also his personal friend, an executive of his media companies, an executor of his estate, and a trustee of multiple trusts, including the trust holding a vast majority of the estate's assets — meant the indemnification agreements were not "bona fide" and the settlement payment was not tax-deductible. The court affirmed the lower court's ruling denying the tax-deductible status of the $200 million settlement and $1.6 million in attorney fees, but remanded to the lower court claims regarding the deduction of other administrative expenses.

- U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania
- U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania
- U.S. District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania
- U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey
- U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois